

Things Just

JAMES PAYNE POEMS JUST AREN'T THEY
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James Payne

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This world is bullshit...

FIONA APPLE

•

...if there are any brothers with you who know about poetic metres, please inform me, and if you have any books on the science of classical prosody, please send them to me.

OSAMA BIN LADEN

Things Just Aren't They

An Entire Life of LARPing

Reality.

It seems real.

If anything were real,
by necessity,
"Reality" would be.

"Unreal" appears real:
when I say things I think about life
people uniformly reply,
"You're being unrealistic."

If "Reality" is real,
then we should probably
take it more seriously, like
"Peace in the Middle East"
and "Free Tibet."

But,
if you do accept reality's realness
and you are walking down High Street
and three very large,
very white men shriek:
"O! H!"
inches into your
"Just-Getting-Pizza" face,

then the idea of reality
becomes more of a burden
than some mooring to grasp
while cast adrift

in the vertiginous static
of subjective thought
and self-obsessed pleasure.

Subjective thought and pleasure in self,
like that found in a cultivated interiority
where shrieking
"O! H!"
isn't an impulse, and
"O! H!"
isn't a sports team, or
a political delineation, or
a geographical distinction, or
an inherited misconception of self and place.

IDK—maybe we should rethink reality.

Like, "What have you done for me lately?"

Like, "Who needs it?"

Like, "Oh God, not this again."

Like, "I got it the first time, man."

Like, *You Gotta Love the Lie You Live.*

Poem For Sitting in Panera

I feel odd about my life.

Like, "Off-Putting."

Like, "Disconcerting."

Like, "Periodic Burning."

Like, "What just happened?"

Like, "What is happening?"

Like, "What will happen?"

Like, "What service industry job am I best suited to perform once I am inevitably weeded out of upward mobility? What position could possibly soothe my ego while my manual labor is exploited to better expedite the alcoholism, caffeinism, and consumerism of the rentier class? And how will I ever make enough money within ten to fifteen years to be in a position to properly raise my children if I do decide to breed? And who am I kidding in thinking that my children will have the slightest chance to avoid thinking about the service industry, their best possible future position in it, and how their own children will have to do the same while sitting in a Panera in 2046?"



You Can Live Forever on a Paradise Earth

For Bernie Sanders

You can live Baja Blast.

You can do what you do when you do you.

You can be an urban coyote.

You can be in a cult that's multi-culti.

Tra la la,
tra la la,
tra la la,
la-la.

You can open a gothique boutique
in a land where 95% of traffic
is DIY bands in Econoline vans.

You can.

You can live in a *United Socialist America*.

Marble, murals, and mahogany:
is that really how a cool person should be?

Cultivate a socialist spirituality:
drink simply—so that others may simply drinkie.

Champagne socialists like J. ROGÉT, ANDRÉ
they'd never know how to say "Saint-Tropez"

because the economy lives in the body:
it decides whether vocal cords warble or refine,
whether it's pumpkin swordfish or Kroger sushi inside.

Capital deforms, it writes-down norms,
embezzles from ova and spermatozoa
until the reproductive cycle constitutes
a negative feedback loop-the-loop:

Money → Capital → Money | Buzzy → Kitty → Bunty

Poverty → Debt → Poverty | MacKenzie → Destiny → McKinzi

But fuck that—I'm not *James*, nor *Jimmy*—*I am*. I am! And I can.

All my money is fuck-you money if I only buy what I'm selling.

My Unique Selling Points to me S/S 2015:

- * Mentally chill.
- * Young, fun, full of cum.
- * Gives good FaceTime; in it to rim it.
- * I will show myself my safe space.
- * Will adopt me a Shiba puppy.
- * And I can keep posting, even if I'm crying.

The first step to loving yourself, is learning to hate everyone else.

Socialism, it starts at home, alone—or in someone's DMs;
disordered people, us opposite people, we need direction,
even if it's straight down; we have needs,

needs on needs, need beyond need,
we need our lives to look like our Instagram feeds;
we need pills, thrills; we're not just content mills—

I'm anti-social media! My heart is a black bloc,
I'm an assembly of organs readying a DDoS against everything,
a march on everyone, a trepanation for our nation, an IED crooning

“...tick...tock...”

Democracy, it responds to me: I see the cops at all of my best parties

where I've finally made the type of friends one commits arson with:
300 Molly Soda Try-Hards and it's Vietnam in our heads;
these proles ain't loyal—300 Molly Sodas killing violence workers
dead.

Tra la la,
tra la la,
tra la la,
tra la la,
la-la.

Turn the ASMR up, 'cause we living forever on a paradise Earth.

It's a freak country, it's a freak world. There's freak speech,
freak Wi-Fi, freak apps, deep freaks, *please* freaks, we can be living,

breathing personality disorders roomsharing the dimensions of our
minds:

420 by 420 by 69, carpet-free, exposed brick, a buzzer, pet-friendly
and we can be, use-free. An embodied denial of service-industry.

We can be, Baja Blast bb.

We can be, a pack of urbane coyotes,
clammy in a Quizno's, drinking be vies.

We can be, MTV
buttplugged — now.

Our future is W 😊 W.

Why the Police Lieutenant Makes More Than the Assistant Professor

To undo the praxis end of theory,
to say “Release,” “Move,”
and “If you do not move,
I will swab you.”

To stick fingers in eyelids,
to dab pepper spray on Q-Tips.

To tackle and baton;
to hit, trap, and cuff.

To forcibly extricate one
from the Student Union’s front lawn.

After all,
there isn’t a large supply
of people willing to hurt someone
for standing, sitting, or speaking.

Ergo,
the high demand:
standing, sitting, or speaking
being what every job-creator dislikes.

As people tend to stand, sit, and speak
about the depravity of an economy
which prizes a police lieutenant more,
so much more, than an assistant professor.

Some Answers to Certain Inexhaustible Anxieties

Only so many people get to do so many things.
And certain things are only done by certain people.

And certain people decide who do certain things.
And certain people only know certain other people.

And certain things only happen in certain places.
And you have to be there to be there to be there.

And one thing, naturally, leads to another.

After all, we are:

Contingent beings
contingent on being
contingent beings
contingent on being.

Also—it's a recession.

*I Ain't Afraid to Love a Man.
I Ain't Afraid to Shoot Him Either.*

— Annie Oakley

In a truly militaristic society,
where dating apps require more ID than open carry,
the first time you set sights on your sweetheart
is through a medium developed by the army.

Your eyes meet hers,
cocked down the barrel of a rifle.

Tap *More Info*: “Girls Just Wanna Have Guns.”

And if you're a leftist, you think “Cool, feminist.”
If conservative, you see a hunter or a gun-rights activist.

Fish don't know they're swimming in water;
Americans don't know their referents
are drowning in a sea of bullets.

Who knows? But it's an enticing collapse— isn't it?
Possible sex *and* possible violence.

So on her third picture, the one in the duck blind,
you pull your trigger tight—and swipe right.

It's a Match!

Tell the children you bonded over buckshot;
that you knew she was the one when she first flashed her glock.

When gun met gun, as if Davidians and ATF at the Waco raid,
you knew you had to pop that question like a hand grenade.

Hud, Speck, Black Crows, Charlie Bird, Lil' Bub, and Me

I'm in a Wal-Mart in Indiana
and I drove a U-Haul to get here.

I didn't even have to move to New York.

I found out I could have my dreams crushed
right here, in my new home, where,

from my balcony in the most liberal town in the state
I can see a cross, two flagpoles, and a courthouse:

Live. Laugh. Love.

I mean,

Books. Beer. Brunch.

After all, now I'm a graduate student,
which means this is the last time you'll want to talk to me.

But I was offered new student loans
the same day I was supposed to pay my old ones:
I *had* to come.

Grad school is about printing out scanned-in PDFs,
considering new ways to say "process-sis," "process-sees,"
"process-sus,"
and mouthing, after conducting a cost-benefit,
"I showered for this?"

I've learned it's all very *problematic*.

But if I ever try to leave they tell me I'll be in line
at the Indianapolis Greyhound station behind
a guy I snorted bath salts with three years ago
whose preferred pronoun is "y'all." "*Cogito*,"

he'll say, "Cogito...errr...though..."

...erhm...therefore...nevermind."

"It's nothing."

I Thought I Was a Painting

you took me home that fall.
I heard you saying, explaining
“I just need something on this wall.”

I thought I was a painting;
I looked good on the outside.
I heard you saying, relaying
“There’s a hole to hide.”

I thought I was a painting,
in need of a critique, if that.
But I heard you saying, declaiming
“Who’d ever look at that portrait?”

I thought I was a painting,
until you ended the masquerade:

“Paintings are hung.
People are hanged.”

Selfies

How many

selfies

does it take

to get to

the center

of a person?



Eighteen to Thirty-One

When you're fucking everything,
drinking everyone,

then one day
you're on Fire Island

and you're Helen Frankenthaler
and you're dating Clement Greenberg

and you have to touch him.

How did it come to this?

*I need some pearls
on the neck of this bullshit.*

Then lecture at colleges
about what you painted,
what you drank,
who you fucked.

It'll be good for thirty-two
to fifty-one.

What else is to be done?

But to repress, repackage,
tour the museum circuit and say:

Hello everyone.

For fifty-two to one hundred and one.

One Must Confront Vague Ideas With Clear Images

— Jean-Luc Godard, *La Chinoise* (1967)

A graffitied portico,
a GIF of calicos.

The trains blaring as we tried to say
anything worth saying on urban decay.

The zines you wrote when you were thirteen
the gums and packs and patches of nicotine

worn under Nationwide's fluorescence, drinking feelings
I hate art, I hate myself, I hate everything.

Everything but sprawling along the Statehouse lawn,
line editing one another's tossed off whatever

with colby and bagel and egg to get coffee to
after spending the night on Palestine, the Arab Spring,
and how I loved you

because Bill Ayers was a Person You May Know on FB,
because of my Lexapro, because of your Pristiq,

because of our ill-founded dreams of a para-academe:
an MFA in Rock and Roll, a PhD in Punk House Curatorial Practice

and we would be assistant, associate, full, and retire emeritus
still taunting, still needling, still murmuring *please kiss*.

But, every night, the sheets would be skewed.
You'd go smoke and I would read and I would wait for you.

Invariably,
I would think of ocean liners of nice boyfriends and girlfriends
passing us swimming laps in the vast sea of our own serotonin.

They'd turn up *Contra* to drown the sounds of our pupils dilating
against our own lives' imminent fatings:

(friend children grad school here there)
(< or < or < or < or < or)
(partner career business there nowhere)

I could never tell if we were shipwrecked or on vacation:
with no sense of place and no route to run

there's just someone with someone.

Was it ecstasy in the rowboat, paddling?
In the sea, lapping? I think it was I thought.

I think it was when it was us as us, when it was just us,

when it was us as us drinking white wine

us as us in the sun

us as us

as us.

Us.

In the Desert of the Really Cool

Tracking the movement
between Grimes's video in the dez

and the Bartender You Don't Like's
Joshua Tree photo-set

is reassuring.

If there's still a top-down hierarchical
commercial consumption of culture,

there's still something.

If a terrain is on trend,
capitalism's still working.

If capitalism can still work,
then so can anything.

On Pills at the Ballet

I may be
the first person increasingly serene
attending *The Rite of Spring*.

Come to think of it,
Vicodin, some Percocet with some tooth,
might've placated les Parisiens gaping at Ballets Russes.

I am, after all, the same as I would be
on the 29th of May, 1913—
crookeder if then, given no spinal fusions,
but parts of me would hold the similarity,
and if you're partial to Modris Eksteins,
and believe in such things, like
politics is an echo of culture, and,
per Clausewitz, war is an extension of politics,
then culture and war are marionettes
whose strings are intertwined,
pulling one another into the trench.

Dose the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées
and forget Gavrilo Princip—if that's your precept.

But without the trench,
think of the lines unwritten:
Siegfried Sassoon—whom?
Paul Fussell's career—where?

There'd be no barbed wire,
no chemical warfare,
substantially more French people, but
where would pop-punk album covers be

without the gas mask's ubiquity?

Either way, we'd still have chemical peace.

At the ballet, at least.

A Philosophy

that unifies
your first stick-and-poke:
the thread, 2 HB pencil, sewing needle
and India ink from Utrecht

with the Connexion bus
to Haarlem; to describe
the moments of transcendence
that lie under your skin

points of permanence
you use to orient yourself
to stand, speak, think,
to always, always drink;
not a systematic detailing
of endless emailing

(you know when you email someone,
and then they email you, and so you email them...)

or all the things you do
that actually make up you-as-you
but you as the you you
describe to people who do not know you.

You, in Kallio, on Suomenlinna, on social media,
you, when you are thinking

this should be in a poem

when you haven't written, edited, spoken,
thought for months;

you, treading Baltic at dawn
as a crystallization of lovers
as champagne in late-summer
under sheets, at the far end of othered;

you, when you don't, finally, ever need
another critique of your own pure feeling.

Our Rattails

Make my hair back
to when you were punk.

We had rattails, sure
things were fun.

Half of it was shaved,
we never really bathed.

Our nails were chipped half-black.

I swear I graduated college.

I just have this tendency to look back.

To Saturday Night Palsy

Sober, all too sober
in a CVS, or
at a McDonald's
looking across the highway
at a McDonald's—if only a Piada,
where wine's cheaper than soda, and superb when mixed;
the real problem with America is all the places in it
and never knowing if it'd be better to be
in its state asylums or its state universities.

“Love it or leave it.” I would *love* to leave it.

To be the man last seen sampling charcuterie at his local
farmers' market
who boards the cruise ship to Italy working as an ice sculptress
\$120,000.00 in PLUS loans—the MFA's finally worth it.

And, friends, there is nothing for me in Italy
but how many hours of my life have I spent waiting
for the band to finish? For some inner resources?
To run to 7-Eleven? For everything to fall in?

There must be White Zinfandel
wherever there are people with no one left to lie to.

There must be me.

Everywhere I go there will be me, assuring you,
You're only as young as you drink
and not being sure if, in terms of beer,
it's too early; it still looks like coffee,
which is fine, but
only for a time,
only for a time.

Dover Thrift Editions (Abridged)

My story's *Dramatis Personæ*:
three 7-inches, four LPs

one used record store
THE BUYER: a friend's friend

eight-dollars to deposit
before Chase's deadline of 5 p.m.

rewriting overdrafts
reviewing all my Dover Thrift Editions

rereading the lines that start in "I"
but only on days that end in "Why?"

do I reenact this who-dunit, my play at a metafiction:
The Case of the Missing Support System.

It stars my friends and family, in offstage roles;
there is a performance daily at 4:59 p.m.

when the curtains rise on my one-man show
at the local Chase ATM.



Porcelain Figurines

There are a lot of cigarettes happening.

If not actually
if not currently
always evinced:
in wallpaper, on ceilings
settled in carpet remnants

within the wood paneling
coating the laminate flooring
the porcelain, all the hobo figurines
everything is

stained
by rumors of the next pack.

The “next,”
a yellow tinge on all proceedings,
rose-colored glasses fit
for the Vinny Testaverde set
sporting as inevitably as death
and incurring debt.

Whether a Marlboro Reds 100
Kools, Pall Mall, or Camel filtered
it's accompanied by Diet Coke,
twelve twelve-packs packed in the corner,

WWII bombers run sweeps on the mantel
hewn from that same aluminum:
“OKE” spans their wings,
Caffeine-Free is used for shading.

Cigarettes and Diet Cokes and ice.

Refrigerator-door ice
alternately cubed and crushed
depending on the two people:

one with her hip replaced
and her left knee
and her right knee
and part of her jaw
and the part of her face
not wearing the lenses
tinted pecan sandies, or
the part asking:

“Who’s up for fruit brandy?”

The other, I gather, has or is a bookie,
eats *Capuzzelle di Agnello*,
sheep brains, saying while reading *USA Today*:

“We have extra canisters of butane.”

And

“How’d the Brownies do on Sunday?”

I Do This, I Do That

I Do This

I see your paintings, big now,
or maybe a print
scrolling through Gram, at
whichever gallery, or fair and

You Do That

You squirt and some of it goes
into my mouth. In the morning
you poach an egg, I follow you out
onto the terrace, into a mist and

You Do This

You actually do it: how much
to learn from you, better at writing too,
much-much; so un-incomplete, know what's what,
what to do; greens on the side—chopped up and

I Do That

I screwed up, drop the morning's bupropion, see a thread:
Morgellons, and think *should I walk pup, I should
walk pup, pup needs walked I should walk pup*, and
and I scroll—and so I scroll, I scroll, and then I scroll.

The Unpaid Intern's Last Wall Text

Pipilotti Rist's (b. 1962) *The Tender Room* was brought to the Wexner Center this year with the support of the Limited Brands Foundation's ongoing initiative *Economic Opportunities For Garment Workers*—those same workers who, BTW, stitched your brassiere.^{1,2}

The Tender Room was installed via a complex selection of cotton suppliers and the sub-contracting of the Limited Brands' initial sub-contracts, and was decorously curated by Wexner staff thanks to oppressed workers everywhere and our inability to hear them speak back.³

Although *The Tender Room* isn't free for the "general public," our shared culture being what it is, the exhibition is a product of free trade: it represents the globalization of the art world as theorized in Bourriaud's *The Radicant*. For instance, Rist is Swiss, the curator's British, and the funding is Saipanese, Bangladeshi, Burkinabè, Jordanian, and Sri Lankan.^{4,5}

In processing *Open My Glade (Flatten)*, as with the rest of Rist's artwork on display, keep your focus on aesthetics: notice Rist's use of the color red, but avoid making connections, actually, just avoid using your head—lose yourself in her immersive installations instead. Consider Rist's articulations of first-world feminisms without noting how patriarchy is embedded in poverty, or how gendered exploitation is an inherent aspect of sweatshop production, or how human traffickers often source factory workers through abduction.⁶

The Tender Room doesn't require of you, because you're busy, you don't have the time, (and that's why you're at the museum, right?) to consider exactly where it was that we, as a culture, crossed the line. Rist's artwork doesn't fall under the rubric of institutional critique, we're not exploring why we asked those private citizens with funds to fund our fun; after all, we already know where/why/how/through what/and from

whom their money comes.

Illiterate, indigent, coerced women and children paid for your red glasses, both the Warby Parkers and *le verre de vin rouge* you'll indulge in with the visiting artist after you walk through our galleries that are underwritten by some rich, white dude who hasn't given a fuck about anything, ever—have you?⁷

As for Pipilotti, well, it's really just the same: socially conscious contemporary artists have been a contradiction in terms since that fad started. But even J.K. Galbraith wouldn't be *too* mad, he'd just term it an innocent fraud and say, "That is that."⁸

1 Tim Feran; Encarnacion Pyle. "Wexner, Limited Foundation To Give OSU \$100 Million." *The Columbus Dispatch*. 16 February 2011. Web. 26 April 2012. <<http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2011/02/16/100milliongift.html>>

2 Steven Greenhouse. "Apparel Factory Workers Were Cheated, State Says." *The New York Times*. 24 July 2008. Web. 26 April 2012. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/24/nyregion/24pay.html?pagewanted=all>>

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The Left Forum

Opening Plenary

I dreamt of going to Oxford
on full scholarship for PPE.

Woke up at a rest stop:
Grab-N-Go,
and met a childhood Stalinist
from Puerto Rico;
he's at OSU—who knows?

Now his ringtone's going off
♪ *If it ain't about the money...* ♪
during a panel at Pace,
and an old communard
born in a geodesic dome's
lost and found box,
a stringy pony pulled to '68,
hairline too pure for this world:
Under the Bandana, the Skin!
who adamantly believes in:
“The everyday revolution of exegesis,”
saltily says, “Like birds, we *tweet*.”

Yes,
the conference about the revolution will be live-tweeted,
simultaneously live-critiqued, by the same three PhDs,
but beyond that vanguard, how many will retweet?

And, at his panel, of course, no woman speaks—
mentrification at its peak. *Et in Arcadia, Egos*.

The Four Types of Leftists:

1. Young and Sexy.
2. Young and Scary.
3. Old and Cool.
4. Old and Creepy.

And then the ones handing out flyers about saving trees.

What's wrong with us?

I wonder, and leave
for what I pretend is more my kind,
art leftists: as a rule, they dress better.
Clothes that fit. Hair, glasses.
A soupçon of social tact.

It's Cassie Thornton and Laurel Ptak:

*Wow, I'm in a classroom in New York
listening to people I respect:*

"Imagine the sound of debt."
"This project is about visualizing debt."

I'm happy I can't see it.
It'd be everywhere I looked.

"Debt isolates you as a subject in capitalism."

But it isolates you with everyone else.

Everyone else
in the "Precariat Set,"
at least,
as Alex Foti calls it:

the unemployed, apprentices,
freelancers, interns, students,
temps, part-timers, 1099s;
everyone I've ever known or loved
locked in a socioeconomic caste,
the key held by three members
of *N+1* and *Jacobin's* commentariat,
Ivy crawling out of their book contracts,
for books about how some unfortunates
can't even write for an alt-weekly,
let alone concoct the next great American novelty
for a proper publishing company:

How Do the Other 99% Live... With Themselves!?

But there weren't any better days; it's always been like this.
We love to listen to the privileged discuss their privileges
and the audience's lack thereof; us socially unconscious,
our lives are slides that fly by in their Lectureship of the Proletariat.

I wake up and pass
Revolutionary Animism
and *Men Are Parents Too?*
looking for a panel Harmony Korine titled
A Crack-Up At the Pussy Riot.

I enter as a woman in a magenta ski-mask,
Spring Breakers chic, is escorted in,
to an embarrassed announcement:

*"Martha Rosler has cancelled.
And Yoko. And J.D. Samson."*

The masked woman,
otherwise in terrorist biz cass,
is seated next to her comrade
who confides to us in Russian *sotto voce*

muffled by a lime-green mask,
matched by a lime-green Volcom long sleeve—
sponsorship cash?

And I can't snitch to the Fashion Police
until Tuesday afternoon: security culture.
It's better than skate; better than surf.
It's the most Xtreme sport on this dumb Earth.

But we can hear her translated. It's vital.
It's serious. The audience is solemn.
Though what they say we've already heard.
We're all here just to say we heard.

Step-out, spirit crushed
under the weight of a Bering Sea of shade balls,
run into a couturier's merch booth called
The Anarchist Lookbook. Its T-shirt designs:

"Freegan"

"Live Everyday Like It's Your Crass"

"Don't Trust Anyone Over Thirty-Thousand a Year"

are expensive.

Then I see Tom Hayden conference-call in,
and are you surprised? He has trouble with Skype;
one never steps in the same Port Huron Ustream twice—
so why are we dialing up boomers on dial-up for these things?
The radical gerontocracy, the nonhierarchical social hierarchy:
we get it, you smoked weed; now, please, let us do things.

Closing Plenary

Clambering out the VIP,
I see, folded into an Elantra,
a Chomsky, ridin' dirty
with a Gary Johnson
bumper sticker; Noam,
dodging teens, mouthing
Help! like a McCartney.

Now Frederic Jameson
has left the building,
chummy with a flip-flopped
Michael Hardt, toes to the world,
entering a Civic, civilly,
with an ABD in tow,
departing for steak,
après conference port:
to discuss the cultural logic
of the evening's snifter and snort.

At the restaurant,
Jameson talks
Brazilian football.

There are one or two lulls.

They're drunk again.

"In Nicaragua ..."

And they're calling out to you
but they're not too sure

what we're all supposed to do.

Grad School Poem

I often
find myself

alone

in a room
with everyone

else's
careerism.



How I Smelled on I-90

I smelled like the last loaf of Wonder Bread
that wafts up and stays till stale.

Like that empty factory
and the shiftless remainders
of our pre-service industry.

Like those painted billboards
that wither and weather away
so 1960s/70s
but are kept,
like a spectacle,
like a kid passed out
in the middle of a party.

I smelled like a sandwich
or a sign painter painting.

I smelled like a sandwich from then that had been made,
eaten by a sign painter painting *CLEAN FOR GENE!* with
enamel paint.

And her primary colors
were the taste of an un reusable battery
or something ununderstandable
like thinking of it all as mattering.

I mean,
I smelled like a summer festival
with big bands
on a big screen
in a big park

with big sponsors
in some big city somewhere.

Like all the kids who were there.

I smelled like the breath used
to wave the peace signs, to ask for 'ludes
to sing along about capitalism and booze
and then, to order food.

I smelled like a human.
A person.
All the people
on March 16, 1968.
In a ditch.
In a pile.
Just lying there.

Q.) And babies?

A.) And babies.

I smelled like a white night decomposing.

It's November 18th, 1978
and we're in a small compartment
hiding in a Jonestown barrack,
or we're face down in a field
just smelling our smells, the smell
of Flavor-Aid's metallic tinge, the P.A. warbles
the grass buzzes and then—there's nothing then.

Besides my smell on I-90, like an unpaid internship you took a
PLUS loan to get.

And the Hanes boxer-briefs worn by the financial aid admin,
Gary, who approved it.

I smelled like tap water.
I smelled like Klaus Kinski.
I smelled like Theodore Kaczynski.
I smelled like the things directly underneath and to the sides
of me.

I smelled like homemade speed
things you buy that you don't need
things you need that you can't buy
like trying to find your roommate
to find something
or someone
and do something
or other
to get high.

I smelled
like the exculpations
of the weight of the world,
the palimpsest
of justifications and whateverness,
the layers
of innit and forgetfulness,
at turns
me and me and me and neverness.

But,
mainly,
I smelled like a dead person
under a Richard Serra sculpture
and the conversation
the other preparators
mumble through after.

I Wish I Had Everything

Everything
I've sold.

I've sold everything
in the last few years.

I wish I had everything back.

Everything back,
because then,

then I could sell it again.

White: Devils, Bread

*All I see is signs, all I see is dollar signs.
Money on my mind; money, money on my mind.*
— @badgalriri

I go looking for bread in Columbus, Ohio.

Subway's dumpster, Broad Street Bagel, Einstein's, Tim Horton's.

I find something in the alley behind Spinelli's Deli.

I palpitate a plastic bag, feel something like food. Rip it, take it.

One and a half pieces of stale salad bread, one end of a sandwich.

I look up at the James A. Rhodes State Office Tower—tallest in the city.

I cross Broad and High and walk around John Kasich's Statehouse grounds.

To last the two weeks past: fifty dollars. I worked, every day. Data-entry: a campaign against Issue 2; or me, standing or sitting, naked, thinking, while white students shaded-in my scoliosis.

I deposit my check at Chase, catty-cornered from Kasich, but I have to wait a day for it to clear.

I think about tomorrow. I think about the idea of buying something, tomorrow.

The politicians walk past me, staring, and all I can think is “Malcolm, Malcolm and his Devils.”

I look at the ticker, and it’s White Devils. The banks, the traffic, the ground—White Devils.

The sky, the air, every sound: White Devils.

Yakub, out of the caves, to keep bread from me while I’m hungry.

I take my trash bread home and put balsamic and oregano on the stale salad roll and Sriracha on the sandwich end.

I think about the idea of variety, I think about thinking about it, tomorrow.

At breakfast, I have several pieces of torn trash and tea.

At lunch, several pieces of torn trash and coffee.

At dinner, tea and coffee in the land of the free, free for Yakub’s Devils: Rhodes, Kasich, Kurgis—me.

Oly Tronie

Inside the commercially-zoned
brick two-story, past
the gallery's dry walls,
driftwood props up
the washroom's window,
all tallow burnt down
to mam's treasure chest;
in the makeshift kitchen
there's pho to be eaten,
sage to burn next.

Outside, peace signs scrawled
over the storefront's façade
about exhibition titles,
the intern, fresh off study abroad,
painted in what they called *Pernod*;
though the paint sample simply read: Pea Pod.

OCT:
WE PRACTICE ENERGY MEDICINE HERE

NOV:
*ABOLITION OF FAMILY ~
CREATION OF A NEW LOVE*

DEC:
*SELF-REALIZATION COOPERATIVE
COMMUNITIES IN THE 1960s*

Inside,
in what little's private,
maps of the universe link

the gallerista's lofted bedroom
to omnipresent systems,
versed in Emerson, Harrington,
Singer, Berry, Whitman,
but wanting to burn him
with her band so this
no, she does not want that
not after Calvin did those things,
un-kew, at the BYOTwee
pajama-party, in 2004,
and before, in 2003.

Today,
she's a scanned-in picture
shooting air rifles
in a valley in Willamette,
radiating Pacific Northwest, so:

“Tranquil”

“Bucolic”

“Verdant.”

But it felt:

“Herzogian nature-as-violence.”

Like Evergreen
was never-ever-evered,
something shattered, severed
and stuck in the peace of her heart.

When did those pieces fall?

- (a) early-20s
- (b) mid-20s
- (c) early-late 20s
- (d) mid-late 20s
- (e) late-late 20s

Or are they just:

- (f) more weathered
 - (g) moss-covered
 - (h) tarred, feathered.
-

The mantra she uses
instead of the group she thought she didn't belong to,
but she wishes she would have stayed in,
but instead she just says again:

*My successes are real enough;
my sufferings are real enough,
and enough is enough is enough.*

She hears it downstairs, in storage.
The intern left her band's old 45 on J/K Records playing;
it starts skipping, its hook keeps repeating:

*There's an international pop conspiracy
to cover up the failures of Youth City,
and all the hilarity in new sincerity.
It's like Kurdt and Courtney,
minus Kurt, plus more hurting.*

*Plus more hurting, plus more hurting, plus more hurting,
plus more hurting, plus more hurting, plus more hurting...*



EndYC

Who taught you to hate yourself?

— Malcolm X

As a child, as I'd wait for Mom to get back from her second-shift
admin position,
I'd watch *Saturday Night Live*, SNL, "Live from New York..." and
laugh at jokes like:

Ohio is a farm and Ohio is a cow and James Payne is a Dodge Ram
swooping a cornstalk named Betty to go on a hayride, snort Oxy,
and husband seven brats
before he turns sixteen, joins the Army, and catches an IED,
because, LOL, he would!

Or James Payne's a sitter, downing Buds and creating ad revenue
in some country called "America,"
an unpopulated, diabetic parasite sucking tax slurpees off New
York City's cracked teet:
"Live from New York, it's Cultural Imperialism!" direct to our
administrative district,
occasionally written by "Ohio grads," I mean, Oberlin or Kenyon—
who went to school
on little slices of New York City superimposed on Ohio's
backwoods soil,
on full "merit," or full parents, or "I didn't get Ivy, so I guess it's
this."

And, as a child, when I first came to New York,
bussing with my Kingdom Hall's congregation
to visit Bethel, the Brooklyn Heights headquarters of the Jehovah's
Witnesses,
where I fooled myself into believing I could ever see the Statue of

Liberty,
quote unquote apostates followed my single-parent family out of
HQ, down the street,
trailing us for blocks, “New York City Blocks,” and into a pizza
place, a “New York-Style” pizza place,
haranguing my mother, informing her that she was abusing her
children by raising them in a cult.

A cult. They’d say I’ve always been a member of one or another in
Columbus, Ohio. You *have* to be.

Now, as an adult, when I meet artists and writers and musicians
and trust funds and online memes on visits to New York City,
they harangue me:

“What’s living in Ohio like?”

“I mean, what’s that even like?”

“What do you even do there?”

“Like, for fun. What’s there to do for fun?”

“What’s keeping you there anyway?”

“Why don’t you leave? Just move here already.”

Well, everyone in Ohio is either 22 and moving, or 32 and staying,
and I’m 27
and I don’t know, *I don’t know*—I know, *I know*: I live in Ohio
because of
why you live in this part of Brownsville and not that part of
Manhattan, or
why you take the train one hour, three transfers, twice a day, or
why you went into debt for this MFA instead of that state-funded
one, or
why you’d rather move his backdrops for free, than shoot wedding
photos for money,
which is all to say: fuck off; which is all to say: *reality*.

Things Just Aren't They

Townfolk talk about Bill Clinton
like they reminisce on their parents before the divorce.

Not who they were as the proceedings drew to a close
nor in the period thereafter, which they claim not to know.

Not in the shining lights of Oklahoma City,
Theodore Kaczynski, but in a selective, collective memory

corroborated by the skyscrapers ran aground
that only stay on to recall the *fin-de-siècle* matrimony
of this town.

Like the Hyatt's sign, it's so childhood vacation:
airport fonts, early-nineties neon

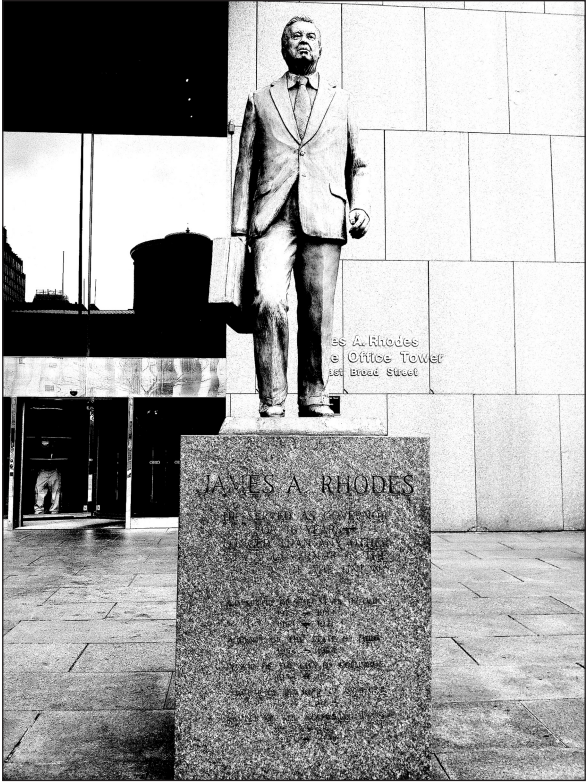
the color of the Christmas we got the PlayStation,
Sega CD, 32X, or Nintendo 64,

I'm not sure which was which,
but those consoles were all before.

If only our coffers were full again—
just for a redesign. I can't stand the pastels
in this personal-is-political-era skyline.

I want it to look outside of my time;
I want out of *my*.

The Best Of All Possible Worlds



The Best of All Possible Worlds

1

How many of you people are in your normal consciousness?

2

I used to say,

“If you’re an adult,
and you stay in Columbus,
you must be crazy, or broken,
or some shit.”

Now, I’m an adult.

And I’m staying in Columbus.

3

Questions:

- (1.) It couldn’t have become the biggest campus in the nation without being the best school, right?
- (2.) Does living in the capital of a province make you more cosmopolitan, or that much more provincial?

Answers:

It's me and Strickland
on Gay Street, always on Gay Street,
Wranglers and dress shirts,
we pass, he nods at me—
just two losers: keep eyes on street.

The street, I mean:

L. Ron Hubbard,
Franklin County Republican Party,
The Carvery,
Miami-Jacobs Community College,
Skylab Gallery,
Liz Lesser, and
Peanut Shoppe.

Into my loft building, I mean:

A sensory deprivation chamber
where moms in the 1970s,
bent under dropped ceilings,
telemarketed subscriptions
to *Better Living*, where
I snort bath salts
off shower tiles
in the shadow of a
higher James,
Guv'nor Rhodes;
his scraper's all in my sky,
his bronze action figure strides outside,
sculpted, etched-in with white pride,
Rhodesia's proselytizing a block to my right:

PROFIT CREATES JOBS.
'PROFIT' IS NOT A

DIRTY WORD IN OHIO.

Rendered for murdering
four college students,
I conceivably could have known,
could have been, if now was then,
at the school, Kent,
where, yes, my parents went.

I lock bath salts with Guvie's figurine
and, surprise, he deigns to speak to lil' ol' me:

*"You're worse than the Brownshirts,
and the Communist element,
and also the Night Riders,
and the vigilantes.*

*You're the worst type of person
we harbor in America."*

Is it 2015? Or May 4th, 1970?
Or 1968 when Dad came back,
from fighting, *well*,
killing, to enroll in that
third-rate state school:

"I would just die to be a student at Kent State!"

He held one hand,
my sister the other,
swung me up and down
High Street in 1989
when these buildings were new,
didn't look like these bricks do,
cleaved and strewn, PBJ festooned—
it's downtown as cartoon.

Swung to the sky, then the sidewalk,
looking up to sky, then down a cross street: Gay Street.

I saw his office that one and only time,
riding the elevator for an hour
up and down Rhodes Tower,
then nothing, not even a visit
to the building the “Green Giant” bit into;
my siblings, they lied to me too.

We lived the most provincial in the province,
the West Side of flyover, where
flies fly over and over and over,
until I flew, back to the start of it all,
to the heart, of the heart of banal.

I have his hairline now,
but not the government job to match,
and all the white devils that do,
come sit and eat lunch on my faux stoop.

They look at me,
then they look away.

Look at me,
Due Amici,
now look away.

Look away.

John Henry,
been barber since Kennedy,
cuts below our sex~community, he sez to me,

“This building was *something* when I got here.”

It's not something, we're not-nothing-nowhere,
like the trolley tracks peaking through pavement,
like the arches that electrified, now baubles to gentrify,
like the streetcar men who flipped the busses,
like the land-grant college was free for the poor,
like the armory, deconstructed into galleries,
like the students who were nationally guarded,
like the Union meant a train station,
like the U.S. once meant a nation,

like Havana, like Stache's, like Larry's,
the Plugged Nickel, Neil House, Moore's Dairy,
Blazer's, Mahan, Monkey's Retreat,

we are nothing, we are nowhere, yet still chase
the possibility of a thing no longer seen,
a capital vaccine, a *something* way of being, an *-ist*,
just to get a collective *whatever-this-is-ness* in the face of Kasichs.

TFW no feel,
that feel when nothing's real.
An on-again, off-again relationship with meaning,
when you live somewhere no one thinks of as a place for being.

If you know everything about something no one wants to know about,
do you really know anything?

I know Columbus invented the Xerox machine,
and therefore punk and zines and me when I was 15,
but it did it for Battelle;
like Thurber and Bellows
made it, just to sell
out to New York City,
not like Chaz McGee,

the best skater we've ever seen,
seen back-flipping for change on 15th,
on 4th, on Third, on Broad, on Gay, and on High,
it's Long,
it's a circle,
it's something inscrutable,
it's a cul-de-sac of lack,
a Celeste,
a Sensenbrenner,
a Taft.

It's Stivers, Pryce, DeWine, or
whomever horrible all the time.
It's the insufferable grasp for meaning
to bolster an alternative weekly's reason for being.

It's a rub on the back
of Café Brioso's Macs.

And it's not a feeling.
It's fact.

5

*"They were the best of times,
they were the end of times."*

I feel like that, all of the time.

Time,
I forget time,
I don't sleep I eat I want I need
I be I don't do I, I don't do time.

Time,

the Times Square signs, the ticker,
and *The Dispatch* tell you the time, time:
it's 1989, everything is fine;
Rockefeller is the party line—
just look to the Chase, Huntington, and Renaissance signs.

And if you can't sleep, count the ticker's headlines:

:: OSHA: PEOPLE NSFW :: LINKEDIN FOUNDER
UNEMPLOYED :: INTERN HIRES INTERN ::
ABSOLUTE POWER ABSOLUTELY RULES :: ACAB ::
:: AMERICA STUCK IN AMERICA :: DRUGFINDER APP
BREAKS INTERNET :: BOOMERS RELINQUISH POWER,
APOLOGIZE :: TRANSGRESS TO IMPRESS :: GODDESS
BLESS AMERICA :: ROFLFML :: DO WHAT W 😊 W WILT ::

When the news begins to make sense, I know I'm finally dreaming.

6

I drew their statehouse instead of
sketching a plan to make it mine.

I muddled my paints,
I broke my charcoal,
I sold my easel,
I skipped school.

I skated when I should have been reading,
I read when I should have been writing,
I wrote when I should have been studying,
I studied when I should have been working,
I worked when I should have been applying,
I applied when I should have been drinking,
I drank when I should have been loving,

I loved when I should have done nothing.

I've done nothing and I should have done something.

I made art: not at CCAD.

I wrote: not at OSU.

And I never cared,
so I'm never there.

I'm here,
not there.

“Well, there there,
we all regress to the mean of our fears.
Have another Two Wheel beer.
Sure, I guess people and places
and purposes purport to exist,
just not here so much. Don't worry,
it's a feeling you won't miss.

Have you thought about joining a bike gang,
or learning how to radically knit?”

7

Everyone I've ever loved,
I met in Columbus. Columbus, Ohio.

Everyone I've ever loved, I met in Columbus, Ohio?

8

The Worthington Express

skips us, the unworthy rest,
so the rich can have their bussing and ride it too,
and not even have to sit next to you.

We're all Democrats,
sure, Columbus Democrats.
So democratic. Michael B. Coleman,
well, look at that:
he wears a cycling cap!
For a decade and a half.

I voted Brunner; you Fisher, but
we both go to ComFest and buy lunches
at places our parents didn't buy lunches
at places our friends tell us about—
it makes us all so proud.

“Do you take the 2?
Oh, I do too.”

I do too.

9

*A surprising number of human beings are without
purpose, though it is probable that they are
performing some function unknown to themselves.*

— Marion, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975)

Service industry
server
servant
servile

serf.

Parochial
prole
peon
pawn
paysan
peasant
pissant, a
pisser, a
puppet, a
poor man's
poor man.

You're
underclass
undercast
uncultured
uncultivated
unexposed;
you're undergrowth
undernourished
underdeveloped
undermined;
you're unrealized
underprivileged
underfunded
underutilized
unknown
uncared about
uncared for
unworthy,
a bore.

They educate a few
and some even sacrifice and stay
just to reign over you;

to spawn those with names
recognizable to you;
to extend their fiefdom through
two thousand two hundred and twenty-two
through you, your body,
and what their families coerce it to do.

Crane, Glimcher, Lazarus, Pizzuti,
Schottenstein, Wexner, Wolfe.

You know what I mean.
It's felt if not seen.

In Bexley, Dublin, German Village,
the Miranova, New Albany, Upper Arlington:

“All of my relatives have Wikipedia articles.”

And then there's the ten people of no known note
you drink NyQuil and Kamchatka with
under the rust chains, by the gas canister full of piss:
an immoral support group, Purple Heart recipients
in the War on Drugs; metasexuals and PLURs
who you watch doing yoga while doing dabs on the roof
and throwing beer bottles at S Models while coming down off X
five stories above Gay Street where we sexshare a slab of cement
that is five dead houseplants, a tincture cabinet,
a smoke machine and a discotheque.

Stowaways stowed away in the storage locker of our own fair country:

Skylab Gallery: Only 539 Miles West of New York City.

Our Midwestern civilization is self-perpetuating too.

Thank Kasich you have it,
and on each 9/11 rave you do.

Waking up,
I look out of my window's cracked plexi to see a traffic jam on Gay.

The traffic jam is just tall bikes, CoGos, circulators, Car2Gos,
one horse cop, food trucks, an art car, pedicabs, a Segway tour,
and one of those vans covered in blown-up pictures of dead fetuses.

On my way to reshelve books at the Parsons branch,
I see a charter school, a Lion's Den,
storage units, a U-Haul lot, a gas station,
car dealerships, a VFW, a beautician's,
Popeye's, Arby's, Rax, Church's Chicken,
and a gaggle of manarchists leaf-letting about fluoridation.

I look to cross the street to avoid over-fluoridation
and see the fetus van is idling at the light, windows down.

The driver in the van is mouthing along to "Got the Life,"
but he only actually sings the part of the song that repeats its title:

...

Got the life.

...

Got the life.

...

Got. The. Life.

Money.

Money can buy you money—isn't that funny?
 So funny: Franny got the internship you didn't get,
 one of the reasons being they made it for her.
 Before, it didn't exist.

At the Governor's office,
 and the Wexner,
 and the CMA.

Now underlings pour into LinkedIn
 regurgitating recommendations her way:

"I have found Franny to be very articulate and professional!
 She is very likeable, pleasant and hard working! She is also a
 role model for young people. I am very sincere when I state
 that I had the pleasure of working with Franny! While she is
 seeking a full time opportunity in the Boston area, I believe
 that any employer would be fortunate to have Franny on
 their team!"

S'weird—no one in Beantown will understand,
 s'okay, just mention your fam's the reason
 FDR pegged Thanksgiving to the fourth Thursday.

If only you could make our Black Tuesday
 be your Black Friday
 be everyone's everyday
 maybe Lazarus wouldn't have been one of the stores
 Westland shuttered away,
 where I'd go on "dates" and drink and steal and break things
 because I had nothing to do
 and no one was around

and I lived in an exurb thirty minutes from downtown;
and, Franny, when a poor person complains,
does it even make a sound?

Is there a CD of it
that one could buy at the Sam Goody,
or the Media Play,
or—well—they're all thrift stores now.

Every store's a thrift store somehow.

Fine.
Okay.

Is it just in my head,
or can you hear my mother singing away?

*"There's nothing surer,
the rich get richer and the poor get-children."*

But we're both kids Franny,
we're just kids,
and, and, and
ain't we got fun?

DISCOVER DOWNTOWN FOR A DAY, START ANEW!

16-Bit Arcade, 39 Below FroYo, Buckeye Bagels, Café Briosio, Carvery, Casa Sazon, Chick's Camera, CoGo, Columbus Commons, Columbus State Community College, Cup of Joe, CVS, Dirty Frank's, Einstein Bagels, El Arepazo, Element Pizza, Families Mobile Kitchen, Fresh 50, Grass Skirt Tiki Room, Greyhound Lines, Hills Market, J. Gumbo's, Jimmy Johns,

Why are we here?

On the high banks of the Scioto.

Why?

Well, we were French—now, we're not.
 Real Ohioans, got no idea how to say “Versailles.”
 It was some Seven Years' Something,
 a French and Indian *Qu'est-ce Que C'est?*,
 and a Tea Tree for Paris—who knows, beavers?
 Otters? It's all mimes-frogs-bisque to me,
 but it's why J. Gumbo's started, yeah,
 and Wendy's, they all used to be “Marie's.”
 Of course, as soon we was Britishers,
 lining Broad was Arthur Treacher's.

How thoughtful,
 how Christian of 'em really, in retrospect,
 that the Wyandot left to start a waterpark,
 so Franklinton could be settled with nary an awkward remark.

Its town hall was a warehouse with a saloon and a café,
 plus a farmers' market, and everyone was white and rode bikes—
 hailed as our number one revitalization project, our first,
 but, wouldn't you know it, Franklinton's flooding is, like, *the worst*.

The planners wanted a dry, centralized capital with all of the amenities:
 a Statehouse, a poorhouse, a prison, a lunatic asylum,

“A drier Franklinton! A grander Zanesville, a comely Chillicothe!”

“The Paris of Central Ohio!”

Prior to this, we just didn't exist.

And how felicitous!

By locating the penitentiary downtown,
why, the prisoners could build the statehouse:
they certainly had the time—foundation to cupola.

Next matter on the agenda:

What Ohio college will get land-grant status?

Who'll turn these farmers into middle managers?

Athens? Cincinnati? Miami?

Wow, much constituencies.

Let's start a new one, in the new city instead,

"Ohio Agricultural and Mechanical College."

Sorry, "The Ohio Agricultural and Mechanical College."

As they say, "*Ohio State, Harvard it ain't.*"

But never say Rutherford hadn't led.

And, as a Harvard man, a Kenyon boy,
who was better to start a school for the hoi polloi?

But why are *we* here?

This where government be, that's why.

This where government be, that's why.

We're here because of the government,
because of the 19th century government,
because of the 19th century,
because of the 18th century,
because of the 17th century,
because of the 16th century,
because of the 15th century
when Christ Columbus

pulled up on the Scioto and said,

“Hey guys, we’re here!”

(Or for historical verisimilitude, “*Hola chicos, aquí estamos!*”)

We’re here because of a
Spanish-speaking undocumented immigrant,
a comedy of bureaucratic directives,
and all the white men that followed.

But we’re here.

We’re here now.

We’re here. Now.

We are here now.

15

THE CVLTVRED MIND THE SKILLFVL HAND

Richard Aldrich, Roger Beebe, George Bellows, Angela Boatwright, Linda Goode Bryant, Emerson Burkhart, Sidney Chafetz, Nikhil Chopra, Malcolm Cochran, Charles Csurí, Inka Essenhigh, Mark Gunderson, Ann Hamilton, William Hawkins, Roman Johnson, Kojo Kamau, Thom Lessner, Roy Lichtenstein, John Malta, Aspen Mays, Tony Mendoza, Michael Mercil, Bebe Miller, Ardine Nelson, Chief Baba Olugbala Shango Obadena, Patrick O’Dell, Mike Olenick, Frank Packard, Cory Piehowicz, Elijah Pierce, Laura Poitras, Tim Rietenbach, Aminah Robinson, Terry Rodgers, Alice Schille, Bob Tauber, Damon Zex, Steve Hamilton, Chaz McGee, Derf Backderf, Milton Caniff, Ken Dahl, Phonzie Davis, Natalie Dee, Edwina Dumm, Matt Furie, Paul Hornschemeier, Billy Ireland, Paul Pierce, Jeff Smith, John M. Bennett, Joe Biel, Kevin Boyle, Henri Cole, Ann Fisher,

Wes Flexner, O. Henry, Christopher Higgs, Chester Himes, J. Caleb Mozzocco, Mary Oliver, Cynthia Ozick, Natalie Shapero, Melissa Starker, R.L. Stine, James Thurber, Cassandra Troyan, Michelle Alexander, Sherrod Brown, Jennifer Brunner, Paul Cook, Bob Fittrakis, John Glenn, Samuel Gompers, Bill Kraus, Bill Moss, the Ohio 7, Lonnie Thompson, Harvey Wasserman, Christopher Bedford, Lucy Shelton Caswell, Lisa Dent, Dave Filipi, Jared Gardner, Sherri Geldin, Michael Goodson, Ron Green, Bill Horrigan, Rebecca Ibel, Duff Lindsay, Patrick Losinski, Nannette Maciejunes, Catharina Manchanda, Caitlin McGurk, Stephen Melville, Helen Molesworth, Jacquie Otcasek, Kris Paulsen, Babette L. Sirak, Chris Stults, James Voorhies, Jimmy Buttons, Mike Thorn, 16 Bitch Pile-Up, All Dogs, Anna Ranger, Bizzy Bone, Blueprint, Cam'ron, Cheater Slicks, Cinema Eye, Daymon Dodson, Defiance, Ohio, Delay, Envelope, Gaunt, Great Plains, Hugs and Kisses, Killed in Action, Memento Mori, Phil Ochs, Mike Rep, New Bomb Turks, Psychedelic Horseshit, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, RJD2, Saintsenecca, Scrawl, The Sidekicks, Sinkane, Slave Labia, Sword Heaven, Thomas Jefferson Slave Apartments, Times New Viking, Unholy Two, Vile Gash, Weedsteeler—Screaming Urge:

I'm so fucking bored.

16

Franny, things can change.

They have to change,
the tune's gone wrong:

*"There's nothing surer,
the rich get richer, and the poor get—bombs."*

But, after the revolution,

architecture will finally say
“U.S.S.A.”

It will still block the sun,
but in a pax brutalism
recalling the name and manner
of every no-one.

Towers will be
cement bongos
airbrushed on the side
“NATIONWIDE”
was appliquéed on,
retouched inside
by gutting ho-hum,
renovating with Sliquid and cum.

After the revolution,
it's ensured
we'll all be insured.
“NATIONWIDE”
shall be no more.

Neither pain,
nor outcry,
nor sorrow;
the letters transposed, reattached:
“DIE NATION”
for the former things will pass away.

After the revolution,
the people will be on your side.

After the revolution:

life.

Us Out Of North America

Us Out of North America

The 20th century is just, like, *never* going to end.

Like, we might run into LaGuardia or Stevenson tonight

because it's 4:35 a.m.
we have a roof
and it's just another hour
for a 40 oz. at Mike's.

*We can drink from sea to shining sea
you, me, and the American Century.*

Or reality: We've been at it since noon last night
and you're still stuttering your Maginot lies.

"...war which led to that war, which caused this war..."

"...inexorably, this world..."

"...we did this because they did that..."

"...I was right, and you were mad..."

He's making nonsense, barely.

She's screaming, nearly.

What are they arguing, really?

1. Land grabs,
handholds.

2. Ideology,
old tomes.

3. Revanchists,
apologists.

4. Monarchists,
lethargics.

Well, I'd rather pass out
than have your lines on my map.

I need the “delete-all” but it hasn't been invented yet;
because triggers trigger triggers—we all know that.

Your amber's majesty is just Detroit
when you're mad at everything; me.

There shall be no polity.

At an impasse—

He thinks: *Us out of North America.*
She thinks: *Us out of North America.*

They wish:

Us out of North America. Us out of North America.
Us out of North America. Us out of North America.
Us out of North America. Us out of North America.
Us out of North America. Us out of North America.
Us out of North America. Us out of North America.
Us out of North America. Us out of North America.
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Us out of North America. Us out of North America.
Us out of North America. Us out of North America.
Us out of North America. Us out of North America.

Bedtime Prayer

Please

let me click
on a link

that will take me
to a place

that I don't
hate.

Arthur Danto

There was this thing
where we would have deep
philosophical conversations
on the nature of art
because we were Americans in Paris
and that is what we heard
we should do there.

I would clumsily refer
to an essay I had never read
to augment my fumbling
out-of-depth arguments
only to have you look at your bestie
from preparatory,
start laughing, and say:

“Oh, *Arthur*.”

I looked forward
for two weeks
to hear him speak.
For us art students, it had
even been made mandatory:

“Important lecturer visiting the Wex guys,
make sure you’re there.
It’s not all that often we get
someone like him to come here.”

But, every day—every day—you dreaded the inevitable
“How are your parents? And your studies?”
from him, his wife, and his little dachshund

in the lobby of your apartment building
on the East Coast
in New York
in Manhattan
by Columbia
where your father worked
where everyone you know went
and where Arthur was Professor Emeritus
of making people from Ohio
look wildly out of their element
while floundering in debate
with someone they adore.

Montréal

I'm reading *Reality Sandwiches*
sitting on a terrace in Montréal
and all Ginsberg keeps doing
is listing the names of cities,
like that's enough.

When Frank does it,
it's charming.
When Allen does it,
it's alarming.

And is it enough?
Why do people who do things
feel the need—go some place,
and then say they went there?

I don't even want to read Ginsberg,
but it's him or Veblen
and I just want to enjoy
Montréal.

Books of Love

We should spend the week together
so I can read all of your books.

Because we have the same taste
and you have your parents' money.

Salobreña

Oh, please, leave the ventana open.

I smoke my first cigar, listen to Hank Paulson, find lemons, make lemonade, make an omelette, eat cactus fruit, read *Looking Backward*, smoke marihuana, steal oranges, eat oranges, look at goats, climb over rocks, see dogs, see cats, see a castle, meet Joe, drink Alhambra, take pictures of anarcho graffiti from '39, order wine, eat tapas, play darts, sing karaoke, pass out on the beach, get humped by a feral dog, lose my hat, have my long hair cut short, see avocado trees, smoke cigarettes, eat candy, look at new bad graffiti, ride in Aissam's car, listen to Aissam's music, shoot stick, look at Brenda's life, look at doughy British tourists, read *The Wall*, sit on a pier, journal, wave goodbye to Joe, eat a salty pizza on a stoop in town, reflect with Brenda, drink in a disused playground as the Guardia Civil creep along, hum "Spanish Bombs," study old Andalusian men walking *la playa* with their hands entwined behind their backs—and I finally learn to drink coffee.

At night, I go outside.

I peer into the Mediterranean's wine-dark sea,
where many people have done many things.

Where the trenches full of poets fought along,
where Lorca looked toward at five in his afternoon.

I see that the sea is still flat.
I see that the night is still black.

That I will soon go

and that it's not entirely different

Yo te quiero infinito

from coming back.



Michigan Avenue

On your right you'll notice Kerneys's
Stands in an Attitude of Defiance and *On the Prowl*:
pretty ideas but ugly lions.

Art is always losing the thing-in-itself,
somehow it always becomes something else.

Lions (a pair) stand and stare
long after Hyde Park, North Shore, and Wrigley
forgot Haymarket, Days of Rage, or everything really
but how the Exchange could be up today
and that Starbucks has a new logo and size Trente,
or *Trente*, or however it is you say,
sufficient to hold the drip-drip of our defiant prowl
with plenty of space left over for more cream,
sugar, stevia, flavor shots, or
whatever syrup is gullested now.

Anyhow.

Note the Blackhawks helmet hiding that *Defiance*,
the Bears helmet weighing down our *Prowl*,
and contemplate the *joie de vivre* we receive
when we cap our spates of productive hate,
and consent to Emanuel,
when we condescend to del Valle,
when we concede to machines.

After all, things are just things
and for sightseers like us, only appearances can be seen.

There's nothing else that these sculptures could

possibly mean.

In this windiest of places
these idle lions stand firm
as truest representations,
of our inert attitude of defiance,
of our inanimate prowl,

our once tender incinerators
cast in bronze and pissed on,
cloaked in a perfect patina of *perdu* purpose
asphyxiating our gorgeous

What could bes?

What should bes?

What-ifs?

Mr. Kiwi's

On Food Stamp Yoga,
(1st of each month)
we eat like Marquises
and Comtes and Kings,
Kings and Queens of Kale,
on the roof of the Court
of Never Buy, Never Sell.

3rd floor roomie Étienne says,

“Acid Tabs,
bring reusable bags.
The inside of an avocado makes me feel glad.
It's like everything I've always wanted but never had.”

Adding,

“Oh, Prosecco, just let go!
À la Cour de Bushwick we never say no.”

And,

“These things people think mean things are mean things,
do-you-know-what-I-mean?”

On Food Stamp Yoga,
(1st of each month)
we love one another.

It's not tough.

Black Tea

The first thing I did
in my new place
was make black tea.

It reminded me of you,
who we'd be:
a couple at night
making tea,
writing poetry.

My new roommate
said to me:

“The Wi-Fi's off,
the bill—I don't know.
Player's needle jumps,
burners, you'll realize,
boil so-so.”

It reminded me of you,
what we'd actually be:
detached and silent,
cold tea,
bad poetry.

J. Crew

I just feel like
it would be nice

once
and only once

to go to J. Crew
and get

one
of everything.

Oh, O'Hare

Oh, late thirties, early forties, smartly adorned couple
encumbered with shopping bags,
with child, with luggage, with waiting,
with your conversation that fills the terminal,
slipping us a bon mot or two, to pass the time
at the airport, seemingly *always* at the airport
in one line or another.

Met during undergrad—coastal.
Honeymoon to follow, holidays, heli-drops,
full partners, in-laws, contented sighs;
fertility drugs for the little one, though really,
you tried.

She with the American Girl Place shopping bag,
he with the coat, the watch, the shirt, the shoes, Oh!
How the wait can get to you!
The line being simply unending,
ten minutes in all, and the worker telling the six check-ins,
three carry-ons, tennis racket backpack,
“Please move along”—the gall!

No, that is too much, far too much, no, that won't stand,
and with a quick retort, a remark of genius was at hand:

“Ma'am, you know what would really get this line moving is if
you had a few more workers to help the check-in man.”

Ah. *Voilà*.

The clarity. The mental acuity,

the trenchant analysis that had eluded the ma'am in her duty.

After all, it had only been three and a half months since her role precipitously soared:

“You’ll need to do more—our profits are dropping through the floor. Got to stay competitive, a marketplace—you know. So you’ll cover the let go. I don’t see why you’re upset, it could have just as easily been you, so...”

It being just three and a half months, possibly four
your incisive commentary must have opened new doors,
new avenues for ma'am's thoughts
on the theory and origin of long lines;
though your blithe conflation—blithest of all time
of the working and the owning classes and their difference in kind,
failed to rebut your obvious fixations on faraway fly-fishing,
credit default swaps, and choking trollops in Red Roof Inns
while on business trips to Annapolis, Maryland.

This faulty conflation—that begged a response,
a clip to the midsection, perhaps—
was filed away, moved along, through the queue that fills her day,
drinks her night, and keeps her rent another month out of sight.

After all, where does the ma'am place in the long line of life?

You are the consumer, *You* are our best customer,
and my Sir and my dear lovely Lady, how you are always right.

Nature Morte

I look
at your old profile pictures

because it makes me
feel shitty

about
my life.

Ice Cream Étiquette

1. One should *always*
read Sartre
while on one's
30-minute break
from one's retail job;
sitting in Dunkin' Donuts,
drinking water out of a free cup,
with—crucially—
the Gin Blossoms overhead.

2. However,
one should never
be seen doing so.

It appears rife
with disjunctive meaning,
an impropriety
few wear well.

3. If one is,
unavoidably,
approached by a
service industry “peer”
and questioned as to,
“What are you reading?”
the mannered individual will reply,
“Oh, this book or whatever.”

4. It is proper
to not purchase D & D's wares,
with a possible exception

for a small black coffee.

Sartre is most palatable
when one deprives one's self
of material pleasures
(e.g. croissants, munchkins).

5. If the aforementioned
course of action is not,
for any reason, possible,
stay in bed until 2:43 p.m.,
stare at one's floorboards,
and eat pistachio ice cream.

It is preferable to do so
out of one's sugar-coated cone.

Relationship Poem

If I left,
it would be for the best.

If we split,
our lives wouldn't be shit.

If I said, "We're done, once and for all."
I could imagine living happily this fall.

Everything will be awful if that's not what I do,
so I'll just stay with you.

Business Tripping

8:55 a.m.

Columbus to Pittsburgh,
Pittsburgh to Toronto,
Toronto to see Laura and Justine
(Justine's interviewing at York)
and Ms. Ginette Martineau,
a compulsive liar from study abroad,
whom one knew better via her fantasias
than one knew others via their facts;
we'll stay in her flat
with its rooftop
topped by rooftop
obstructed by condos
paved over by parking lots
everywhere there's condos
and on the street:
pharmacies.

We go inside
one by one
to buy
codeine and caffeine
rolled into one.

We call it "Children's Ecstasy,"
or sometimes "Roman Coke,"
or they boil it down
and cops call it "smack."
We sell it off, call it "rent,"
go to Kroger, call it "food,"
other people call it "making a living,"
or they would if they knew.

We each buy all our migraines can take—
plus *cà phê đả* to go—
cram pills in this gutted hardback,
Leibniz's *Monadology*,
because, hey, « *c'est le meilleur des mondes possibles* »
and pack it in an Amazon.com parcel addressed to Lily:

Ms. Lily Chang
57 E. Gay St. 2nd Floor
Columbus, OH 43215
U.S.A. ;~} XO

Then to *Postes Canada*,
OCAD, This Ain't the Rosedale Library,
and Ginette's for dinner,
served with the following topics to consider:

Gallery proposals, lovers, and old friends,
a new cobbler, renewed boots, and a jacket still to mend;
chambray—almonds and edamame,
beluga lentils with a fresh smattering of op-eds,
intradepartmental intrigue, and
“You should think about writing a grant instead.”

Paired with EBT wine varietals:
red, white, and not made right,
it's something of an early night.

Breakfast: poached eggs and red hash
(Ginette cooked for Monsieur in Neuilly-sur-Seine)
then off to the bus again.

Bye Laura and Justine.
Bye codeine and caffeine.

Hello Megabus.
Now back to Columbus.

It Doesn't Make Any Sense Because You Are Smiling

You “flick-off”
the camera
in multiple
profile photos
in such a way
that the second knuckles
of your index and ring fingers
are set at different heights
and the index’s
is noticeably higher.

Ineffable feelings
of confusion and concern.

I really think
I need to be there for you.

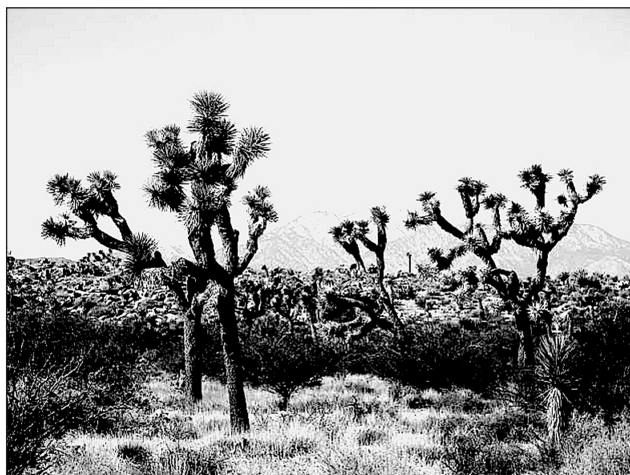
The ♥ of the Matter

A ♥ is not a heart
but a symbol:
a pair of parentheses
set horizontal
on a triangle,
instead of the organ as is:
bloody and functional,
ugly and unlovable.

A ♥ is a visual device
of schoolchildren and designers,
but former imagineers
think of ventricles,
of their sentiment and biology
as being identical.

They know there is no shorthand for
what's between two people,
no sufficient word or Edit > Special Characters for:

“It's difficult to sleep when you're not here,” or
“I don't like it when you're not near.”



Claimants

A look, achieved
by a sifting through
multitudes, mines
of self-stratagems
outfitted and supplied
by a buzzed hive mind;

it's nothing about you
as you, except as an adept,
a talent scout, an assimilator,
a chameleon, a homesteader,
a social researcher digging
through the nation's Internet Archive:
Zeitgeist's apprentice

at target practice, or donning
a circlet of flowers in Scandinavian-braids:
worn once, on a lark, with a friend,
now it's one of only six aspects of you, both knew

the event was designed for documentation,
like performance artists lining up the videographer
weeks before the piece, for CV corroboration,
to hawk to a collector, or to secure a curator's admiration.

The tropes that do move—
yoga pose on a cliff, holding a fish,
reproduced in Kusama's infinity rooms—
are modular prefabs, readymades;
they used to highlight them
in the Sears, Roebuck & Co. catalogue
for High Desert land claimants

who only had three years to prove up
a 10 x 12 with plumbing and a pup:
mail-ordering a life, an address, a mailbox.

No lots left.

Not in the Mojave;
especially not Morongo Valley.
No more five-acre Jackrabbits per se,
but there might not have to be.

Not just physical structures can be built;
space is what we make of it:
social or desert, or,
like identity online,
both at the same time.

Occupy Everything

In all capitals, in all the capitals, all of the time:

OCCUPY EVERYTHING OCCUPY EVERYTHING
OCCUPY EVERYTHING OCCUPY EVERYTHING
OCCUPY EVERYTHING OCCUPY EVERYTHING

But I don't even feel like being in my own body.

Environmentalists

I do not want.

I need.

I need.

I need.

So when I say

“I want you”

the subtext one should read

—air earth sea

—I you me

is that you are an environment

and I am nothing

without what I see

without what I breathe

without whom I’m free.

Cloudberry Jam

From the number 2 on High I see:
people I know on the street.

Tard, Horseshit, Anka, Alix.

My 401(k) being Anna Karina dancing
Kate Bush: *The Dreaming*, my IRA,

my total gross income twixt
the front and back stickered covers
with Sharpie through OSU Libraries.

“So anyway, I threw away my shoes
when I bought new shoes.”

Is that what you do?

“And I’ll throw away these shoes
when I buy new shoes.”

Into the refuse, into some other continuum.

On the number 2 on High we:

Drink, fight, and fuck.

Beg, cry, and kneel.

Live, love, and suck.

Sleep, real, and feel.

In some other continuum.

Total net intake, FY2010: *Marmalade*.

I'm on a cloudberry jam.

Enter man on bike on sidewalk. (Jeeringly) "Homos."

Parce que nous sommes dans l'autre continuum.

We could live in the past, in a portfolio of photographs
somewhere, not here, nor there, but always in some other continuum.

And you?

"What is it about you?"

Because I do like something about you
even when riding the bus is all we can do.

Stevie Nicks Twirling

I stopped liking music.

But I didn't stop thinking about it.

But I did stop caring for it
probably in the backseat, with a book
probably in someone's bed, asleep
probably in-between comments, looks.

Probably I stopped liking it
as I was playing it, or
maybe I just transferred those thoughts
of how being in a band with you was
into a more general feeling
toward a range of notes
and the conventions for arranging them.

Look: life is hard
probably I/it am/is difficult
probably—I have heard—"We are too alike."
probably feedback ≠ brilliance in 2009.

Probably overburdening everything
as I seem to do to it, or
whatever, and anyway,
we're out of that place.

I don't blame you necessarily.

(I don't really care (Though it does seem
a plausible explanation when I sit to mull it over.
(But who's to say I'm not projecting? (Or displacing.

(And what would it change? (Can anything change?
(Can this? (Can you? (Can I? (I?)))))))))

I just stopped liking music.

Transitive Proprieties

For Carte P. Goodwin

A senator dies
leaving a bald-sized moth-hole in otherwise steel wool.

All the Sorels lying in wait, they've dreamed of this
and fumble over one another to stand for Congress.

It's like sharks, sure, it's like vultures, yeah
it's like a lot of things we think of animals as doing.
It's like fictional characters fatally flawed by ambition
it's like movies of situations that seem too fictive
to come to fruition.

But—I swear—you can hear
on windy summer nights
gasps in the æther of the newscast, like
a child chanting their Christmas list in delight:

NEW TIMES, NEW BLOOD

NEW TIMES, NEW BLOOD

NEW TIMES, NEW BLOOD

NEW TIMES, NEW BLOOD

The sharks, sure, the vultures, yeah
they eulogize for the moment
panegyrically assess
why they best represent
the passed-on's past
on measures and repeals
to carry forth that gorgeous West Virginia State Seal

into the 21st century of the ruling class
ruling and teaching provincials
that class rules class.

But you don't have your sinecure yet,
M. Carte Blanche.
You still need to feel.
You need to show them that you feel.
Make them feel
that you feel that you really feel.

Even so,
sweat shows on your lapel.
Your figure cuts nothing to believe.
The air of your tribute
isn't fit to breathe.

It just musses one's gel.

It just salves one's hell.

Montauk

Montauk,
Montauk.

Why did I go
to Montauk

for the first time
with you?

I like things
ruined.

Places
forever related,

emotion tombs.

Or being with you,
again,
naturally drove me
to water.

I never learned to swim.



Bussing's Stargazers

The bus,
I took the Megabus,
packed, again,
it got to be so I could go
in minutes; only
a charger I'd forget,
which you had, so
I could pick up and leave
like closing Gchat.

Fellow travelers
of the standard litany
slept between you and me,
Chicago and this "city,"
Indianapolis and Cincinnati:
only lights in the windmills and soy fields
between me and Pilsen;
you and your much-rumored boyfriend;
us and a few chasms not spanned
by my ritual transportations.

I remember listening to
NPR cover *Bad Lieutenant*
with Werner filling your kitchen
before Barry's inauguration.

How is that even possible?

A train shaking the railroad apartment's windows.
Ice on the L steps.

Wolf Kahn's granddaughter, your roommate,

who always had puss coming out of an abscess.

Marcel Marceau pretending. M. Hulot bumbling.

Harpo at his harp, Groucho in a mirror—Hadley in your painting.

We'd take Haddles, close your door, get on your childhood bed,
put our flip-phones together and record the feedback.

On the recording you ask,

“Is it recording?”

Listening, now, at swim
to the two constellations spin,
lost again, in Panama sands,
the sounds too diffuse to understand

without one's cheek
to a Megabus window.

Without water,
dry minnows.

Desert Storms

Chuck Hagel
remarks somewhere
that all facts and personages
in world history
occur, as it were,
thrice.

He forgot to add:

The first time as tragedy.

The second, as tragedy.

But, as for the third,

tragedy.

It's Always Been Like This

Is Art Wrong?

It doesn't feel right.

Are artists fond of the term "interrogate"
because they know it's torture?

I just read "preparator" as "perpetrator."

"Paint" as "pain."

"Curator" as "carceral."

Think about it:

White walls.

White wine.

White people.

I mean, is Capitalism Art's friend, enemy, or frenemy?

Do Art and Capitalism occasionally meet up for drinks,
or do they wake up everyday and grab coffee?

Do Art and Capitalism co-care a dog?

Who gets it in a split?

Marry, Fuck, Kill: Capitalism.

Kill.

Marry, Fuck, Kill: Art.

Kill, but after fucking.

Or maybe marry first, just
for the gifts; to say “I do,” then “I did.”

And the honeymoon, I know,
is the only way I'd ever get to go
to Basel, or Reykjavik, or Tokyo.



I Love Leni Riefenstahl

Carl Andre threw Ana Mendieta out of their 34th-floor window.
Norman Mailer stabbed his wife, Adele Morales, with a pen-knife.
Louis Althusser strangled H el ene Althusser—and wasn't even tried.
William Burroughs shot Joan Vollmer dead and never served time.

Woody Allen molested Dylan Farrow.
Charlie Chaplin had three teen brides.
Allen Ginsberg was a member of NAMBLA.
Roman Polanski left a 13-year-old drugged and sodomized.
Terry Richardson, Terry Richardson, Terry Richardson.
And Bill Cosby's been a somnophiliac rapist the entire time.

Jimmy Page abducted, then hid Lori Maddox, who was 14,
a year after she had sex with David and Angie Bowie.

R. Kelly, at 27, illegally wed a 15-year-old Aaliyah
after producing her record *Age Ain't Nothing but a Number*.

Jerry Seinfeld, at 39, with his show in prime time,
dated a high schooler, Shoshanna Lonstein.

Jerry Lee Lewis, at 22,
married his 13-year-old first cousin once removed.

Devout Eric Gill, sculptor and typographer, Gill Sans for one,
molested his daughters, slept with Gladys, his sister;
and journaled about fucking his dog.

Christopher Hitchens, ever the contrarian,
supported George W. Bush's shocking awing of Iraqi civilians.

Steve Ditko, the Dr. Strange behind Spider-Man,

is, to this day, a fervent Randian.

Harold Laski, Bertrand Russell, Alexander Graham Bell,
John Maynard Keynes, George Bernard Shaw,
Margaret Sanger, FDR, and H.G. Wells: all eugenicists.

Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Le Corbusier, Salvador Dalí,
T.S. Eliot, Knut Hamsun, Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein,
Richard Wagner, W.B. Yeats, and the Futurists
were anti-Semites, or collaborationists, or just plain fascists.

Eric Clapton once implored his audience: “Keep Britain white!”

Philip Larkin and Kingsley Amis: two racist, right-wing, misogynists.

Arthur Schopenhauer was a white supremacist.

The Nazis though:

Joseph Beuys,
Coco Chanel,
Günter Grass,
Philip Johnson,
Paul de Man,
Emil Nolde,
Albert Speer,
Richard Strauss.

The Nazis did everything.

The Nazis did it all.

Martin Heidegger,
Leni Riefenstahl.

But I love Leni Riefenstahl.

I love Leni Riefenstahl.

In Youth is Pleasure

You put your Labatt
between your knees,
your hand over my eyes,
shook the can, your finger on the nozzle,
and with glitter I was finally baptized.

I may have said,

“I want you to cover my face in glitter.”

I tweeted, I know, I checked the timestamps:

I want to start a cab company called A.C.A.B.

and then,

Know Thyselfie.

and then,

If you fuck enough adults, you become one.

and then,

dgaf

The next morning,
I woke up alone.

Not at an unheated warehouse party,
just in an unheated warehouse.

In an Oxford and trousers,
so I was ready.

Still drunk, then vomiting,
scrubbing my face red,
wiping a dermal away,
glittering underneath.

It's fucked up that my anxiety in Newsroom Copywriting in 2008
enabled me to tweet lucidly while self-medicating in 2014.

But it also enabled me to compose this email— so my anxiety
over everything:

Dear Helyn,

*I'm sorry, but I woke up with silver glitter encrusted
on my face. I will not be able to work the OSU TEDx
event today. I still have silver glitter on my face. The
glitter won't come off. It was my 28th birthday. Please
take this email as my resignation.*

*Best regards,
James Payne*

It was worth it; I hadn't hung out with you for a long time.
I had fun for once, and a bottle of Vinho Verde—it's sort of like
white wine.

The studios were smoky, which I say I'm not into, but it makes
me feel young.

Before the smoking ban, Bernie's would stay on you the next day,
and when you were caught in its miasma you could barely even
see anyone.

Now when your bands go on tour, everyone sees you

and you only smell like armpits and alcoholism.

I turned 28, but I didn't die.

And you just left for tour again the next night.

I lost my job,

but we're both still alive.

No one alive

has committed suicide.

And maybe I can write a grant for being alive

if first I learn how to write about it right.

Practical Mathematics

I am going to cost

far more

to fix

than I would

to replace.

Ruth Gruca

If you close the bathroom door tight,
turn out the black lights,
and say “Ruth Gruca” in the mirror
sixty-nine times,
ten more net artists will materialize
in the backseat of an Uber
driven by a man with no eyes
named Natas, Mr. Scratch, or maybe just Moriarty,
who will speed the HBAs straight to your loft party.

They’ll buzz-in,
grab your Negra Modelo,
pour out your Pures,
let your cats out on the ledge,
group-piss, group-bleed on your bed,
spill the dirt out of the houseplants,
mock the way “ya’ll” say “aunt,”
nab the projector’s MacBook adapter,
replace the fog juice with trashwater,
tag the elevator and stairwell,
untag you from all their pictures,
and tell your favorite DJ:

Never ever ever fucking play there.

Then they’ll fuck your girlfriend.
Then they’ll fuck your boyfriend.
Then they’ll fuck your ex-girlfriend’s
girlfriend’s boyfriend’s ex-boyfriend
and allude to it to their 100,000 followers on Gram,
except the allusion is just a picture of you and:

“I fucked your girlfriend, boyfriend, and
ex-girlfriend’s girlfriend’s boyfriend’s ex-boyfriend.”

After Ubering back to the studio,
the net artists will GoogleDoc their night’s Notes,
then hire your school-chums, friends, and fam,
to crowd-edit it into a manuscript for a novella
(its conceit is that it’s written as if it’s your memoir)
titled *The Only Hipster I Hate is Myself*, and it’ll be acquired,
sight unseen, by Farrar, Straus and Giroux’s President’s son,
who’s fucking or buying drugs off of—at least—two of them.

The book advance will fund the production of the net artists’
colossal SNUS sculptures, E-Cig dildos, vape-juice videos,
and the book will win whatever fiction award
their net friends made-up so their other net friends
would award their own net award-giving endeavors
in order that yinzers in the hinterlands
could better know your cultural betters.

The novella will be reissued in a money-grab in 2089
as part of a Classic American Early-21st Century Lit line, listed:

The Only Hipster I Hate is Myself
Unabridged: Edited and with an Introduction
by Harold Bloom Jr. Jr. Jr. Jr. Jr.

Your great-grandchildren
will be assigned it for their course
Experimental Net-Narratives
in the Electronic Stoned Age
and read it via cranial implants
with data received
from free-market telepathy delivery:
ESP-EX.

In the novella,

you're a barely realized,
barely fictionalized basic bitch,
like, let's say if your real name is "James Payne,"
then your character's name is "J'aimes Pain," and
J'aimes Pain is doing something you saw them do on the Internet:
painting, posing, or just plain embodying an endless privilege;
so when your great-grandchildren process the chapter
where you ask the net artist antagonists:

"What are your plans after your current projects?"

Your great-grands will drop-out from sustained resentment
toward their lame-ass antecedents
who couldn't even chill, hang, vibe,
memoir, or throw a loft party correctly.

Your progeny
will hitch a Sky Horse
out to the slumburbs
to harvest plywood
raise geese
desalinate concrete
crossbreed Shiba-Poodles
eat field mice
and kill passerby
for the last canister
of solar hydrogen SCOBY-o-line
to manufacture a vial of eco-poppers
to drink and erase
any last trace
of reading about
your cool loft space.

EPILOGUE

Then your great-grand-oogles'
Shiba-Poodles
will rip their OD'd owners' faces off,
wear their great-grandfaces,
and pose for a trend-spotter
slumming the slumburbs for slumpropriation
who quickly blinks their iPhone 666 cam.

The slumtogs' choice IG epitaph is:

"Wild new look 2 DIE 4—we were out here!"

It makes the cover of 2089's *LICE* photo annual,
memes, and then an emoji is released
of a Shiba-Poodle wearing a human's face
which thirty billion humans use as shorthand
to signify the complete and utter disgrace,
the human fraud, composed solely of alcohol and lies

that you call your life.

Pixelated

Study your lover,
see they're pixelated.

Everything silver,
nickel plated.

Your favorite poem:
linked aphorism.

Tumblr sculpture:
only wood; gypsum.



To a Greek Marble

I made words to you
on the roof, for hours
as summer dusk'd bank towers.

At best, just cobbled
when your words
after digression
after digression
came to board, to rest.

Between turns
there were travels,
travails in Kyoto as a tween,
your father upset,
your brother's lack of ambition—
besides children;
your mother's displaced plans
cuffing the hands
drawing Grecian marbles
that look:
unblinking, unfeeling,
leech'd of all garish color,
congenitally aesthetic,
with a patrician's remove—
how I had perceived you.

Never can I see
past my reflection
to all the pictures
at the exhibition.

Or in reading words

not conflate the author
nor conflate myself
with their reader.

But your words,
familial admissions,
betrayed a person, a relation.

Though circling divulgences
in the rough of my mind,
returning, sorting,
makes you no less impassable,

I, no more able

To a Greek Marble

to hold through
the statue's smoothed-over pupils to a you

miles away

a monument in foreign lands

lands away

you, you always kept hidden away
except as we sat on tarpaper
until midnight, like it was day
playing words
to not never say.

BHL & Oxford, NC

I want to be Charlie Rose,
a lot.

I'd have an apartment on Central Park,
a farm in Oxford, North Carolina;

a Southern drawl improbably paired with an urbane affect,
and it'd be socially acceptable to be excited to talk to architects.

My interns would be the children of billionaires;
I'd get to berate them, never pay them, never even write
a single recommendation.

I just don't want to be friends with BHL.

I don't trust BHL,
or any acronym.

I don't know what to say
to someone who says:

"China is so fresh and honest and real."

And it just feels off
when he says he's
un philosophe.

Could I take BHL seriously? I don't know.

I don't know,
Charlie Rose.

I don't know.

SSRI Poem

What are we all so anxious for?

We're dirty,
we're poor.

And we'll be dirty and poor
until we aren't anymore.

G&Ts

with lime because once the sun didn't set
on mixed rations used to down quinine.

Because that was our drink.

Because we who shared
that anglophilic affectation
(like plimsolls, gardens)
again are spilled on nations:

Berlin,
futons across Brooklyn,
of course London,
Logan Square,
Phnom Penh,
Echo Park,
and somewhere in The Mission.

Because that last day was a game day, a Saturday,
like today is a game day: Ohio State beat Cal.

And that I can tell just by looking out.

Trop Moderne Lovers

For Gabriel Simony

Gabriel.

He said it best:

“C’est trop moderne.”

“C’est trop, trop moderne.”

If there’s something that’s French, it’s:

“Everything as it should be.”

“As it would be.”

As none of us would even recognize it
if it were something we could see.

They cursed and they fucked,
Grandpap and Grandmammy,
the printing press pissed off the rote memory:
I’m glad the Internet had me.

Can’t all stay, V-E Day;
my mackintosh is spelled differently.

“Mais, mo’dernity, mo’problems.”

Well, one young punk Modern Lover am I.

Et tu?

“I’m a little dinosaur.”

It’s nothing new.

Some day I’ll be dignified and old...

and I’ll try not to sell the world I was sold.

Hall Road

A man
in acid bleach jeans
rapping on the K-Farm's rental
in the Year of our Lord
nineteen ninety.

The junebug farmhouse
the only structure one could see
corn and thin asphalt moats
stretched on over all everything.

At the edge of the corn
a '79 Plymouth Horizon
sat
like a monk
in flames.

"Do you have an extinguisher?"
"No."
"Oh."

He was moving away—a failed relationship.
My father, mother, brother, sister, and I
stood with him
watching everything he owned
burn.

It was summer.
There were dragonflies.
I was holding a stuffed bunny.
Sitting, waiting

on the Prairie Valley Township
Volunteer Fire Department
in the shadows
of the sunflowers
of our last garden.

No one passed the entire time.

Unbearable Whiteness

I'm breaking new ground
in the expanded field of misanthropy.

Will I kill myself before my self kills me?

RN, I just want to unhinge my skull
and place my brain in a vat of alcohol
and set it in a cellar to pickle
so I can live my life like a normal.

It's the only way I'll both be happy.

If you see an author's name in the news, they're dead.

If you see my name in the news, I killed an author.

Or an artist, or curator, or a DJ, or barista,
a graduate student, documentarian, or comedian,
a social media strategist, blogger, or activist,
non-profit profiteer, librarian, actor or actress,
dancer, director, designer, musician, editor,
booking agent, cartoonist, publisher, journalist,
or someone who just works in "development."

It's not a threat. I've had an unread tab open
on "How Self-Control Works" for three days.

Which means I really want to. I just can't.

Grim and Merit

I've fucked on five of eight Ivies.

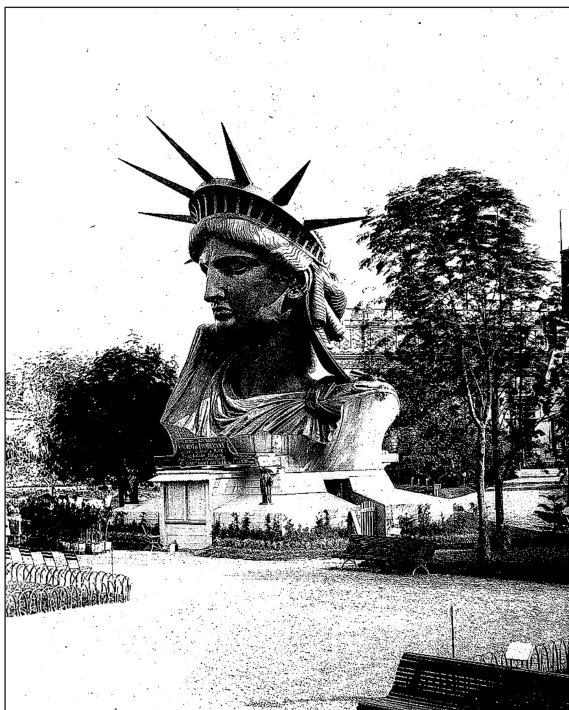
But only with state school kids, Pell Grant kids, art school kids
after we stripped private libraries to sell to Amazon alums
we lift logos, we Photoshop, we screen print, we pop-up shop
we settle our public debts, hawking their T-shirts
to rosen-faced Jims and Toms who sez, "I coulda goed."

Their wardrobe's our whole line, perf couture for collecting
parking fines.

They drink one too much, drunk; on Crimson, intergenerational
aspiration—

it's blood clotting their hearts and minds, it's blood those schools
mine

shafts ran through humans whose groundwater's poisoned
like my grandfather, like his grandfather, was a miner, so I know
"It'll all fall in on ya," and it's not going to let you go.



Crossing Staten Island Ferry

They heard "RISD," not "CCAD," so they hired me.

It's de Blasio's ferry now,
I'm allowed to say "inequality."
It's just not allowed
to mean anything.

Later, they checked with RISD, and fired me.

My friend pees on men for money.

It's his birthday,
we ride the ferry at night,
I buy him a Heinken,
he needs to use my phone
to text a landlord he's never met
"Don't cash my check till the weekend."
But the outlets are disconnected
by design, so I'm out of charge,
scrawling ink on paste-down endpapers
instead of tapping Notes, or Gmail
like we're "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"
and I am not a first generation Internet-American
drinking a Staten Island Ferry Lima-A-Rita.

*And you that shall cross from shore to shore
years hence are more to me, and more in my
meditations, than you might suppose.*

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING,
SAY SOMETHING.

Do I have to say something
about everything I see?

Do I have to keep
reiterating these things?

*He's really vacant, like
On the subway, well it surprised me
He's a moodel, but he likes my photography.
His father is a barrister in Canada.
He did that shirt for that company.
Do they say "barrister" in Canada?
He's rich, we hung out under a tree
And drank Ritas on the beach.
I need the number for M.
She needs to play at Tavi's party.*

It's where people exist:

where Tao's dealers live
where Petra's Petras Petra
where Dev writes everyone's everything
where Aidan draws hands more expressive than volumes of poetry
where Karley's within twenty miles of me
where Pictureplane just reified a piece of the 1990s
on B&W long sleeve.

"Hip" is what we call those things currently energizing capitalism.

A gull is careening.

*Watched the Twelfth-month sea-gulls, saw them high in
the air floating with motionless wings, oscillating their bodies,*

*saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their bodies
and left the rest in strong shadow.*

Some preening, one diving.
A few are fledglings, they look
like they'll be sticking around;
others are older, some aged.
Some just laying in the water
but not swimming.

*How much would rent be on the ferry?
Think NYC DOT would sponsor a residency?
A skill-share?
A WWOOFing-possibility?*

Interesting how people are into Brutalism again.

*A West-African antiquities dealer
Asked me where I'm from: "Ohio."*

And she just said, "I could tell."

Pierre Bourdieu
back and forth on the ferry
no economic, no social, no cultural,
no symbolic capital in me;
capital attracts culture, culture attracts me,
but active cultures only thrive in flotsam
detritus, wreckage, garbage
still we Ohioans see gleaming NYC
New York Man Ohio Man Last Week
and like an implanted memory
only register *Seinfeld*, graffiti,
someone rich and charming
who, by proximity, makes me interesting.

*The simple, compact, well-join'd scheme, myself disintegrated,
every one disintegrated yet part of the scheme.*

When Millennial migrants

bite into a gluten-free Madeleine,
in one of their neighborhood's fourteen French GF bakeries
and are transported into a rare mood of reverie
that divulges their origin story
through remarks condemnatory
on the state of their Midwest,
what they're really saying is:

"I hate poor people."

And:

"I'm more comfortable
near financial services,
derivatives,
accumulated capital,
running into my overlords at the dog parks of our metropole.
I just feel more myself
around no one else
I've ever met or known,
539 miles east of home,
fully expressing my ability
to work without end
endure sexploitation
be ground into the finest powder
snorted by the highest bidder:
#bklyn #nyc #i<3ny #readyforhillary"

Comedy is tragedy plus time ;:-)

NYC is Doha plus or minus 100 years:
an ancien regime's
once radiant *here*.

Its past is the Brooklyn Banks,
skate-blocked, fenced-in, patrolled,
seen through chain-link and uploads;

phone footage taken off VHS tapes
of meet-ups in 1991 when wheels
were the size of dimes and caught in a tornado of JNCOs.

I mean, the past is there, I guess;
hindsight is 24/7.

*I am with you, you men and women of a
generation, or ever so many generations hence.*

*Others will see the shipping of Manhattan
north and west*

ships still used
for practical purposes
I'm not privy to,
shipyard barges shipping
shipping-containers shipping
logs to Soylent-colored
future converted loft-spaces,
shipped next to shipping containers
to ship the plastic containers
from The Container Store
you ship your merch in.

*In a room at five, we can crash.
Shelter in place, wake up at night.
Boxes of records from the press.
No sheets on the mattress.
A few, just a couple sprinkets.
Black spots through the carpet.
They're sending them out tomorrow.
It's the split everyone wants to get.*

Lady Lib foreshortened,
rising to the height, the depths
of the Financial District's buildings

the Freedom Tower's offices
1776 feet empty like her signification:

*A mighty woman with a torch,
whose flame is the imprisoned lightning,
and her name Mother of Exiles.
From her beacon-hand glows world-wide welcome.*

more believable at Trocadéro
where being disembodied
didn't point to misogyny,
only a side effect of sheer monumentality.
If a woman didn't symbolize liberty
would the U.S. take it as seriously as its patriarchy?
Liberté, égalité, fraternité.
Something lost in translation or on relocation,
1789, 1871, 1968, but it's 2015
and the projects that pock
the landscape over her shoulder
are just too American to imagine:
how anyone else could have ever been here,
been anywhere? How could there not be reinforced poverty
to keep the workers Capital needs to power our amusements;
like our family photos, she must always be Photoshopped too,
bigger, greener, not surrounded by such obvious issues.
We need postcards that can move on the sidewalks of the
Americas of the Avenues.

We stop on Staten.

Everyone must unload.
Unload to unload the homeless
send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
a man with eleven bags of beer cans
twist-tied to a shopping cart
amid a family of hasids
wakes from his nightly power nap.

*We were very tired, we were very merry—
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.*

Oogles and their dogs, seen through payot
the wretched refuse of your teeming shore
Discharge patches, Carhartts, *it smelled like a stable*
then cops open the door.

*Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes,
how curious you are to me!*

Was this Spalding Gray's last audience?

The similitudes of the past and those of the future...

Spalding Gray, back and forth all night on the ferry,
liberté, égalité, fraternité, kings, religions, orthodoxies.
Napalm Death, drug dogs, Steel Reserve, 3rd shift slogs...

*We were very tired, we were very merry—
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.*

Spalding Gray
a fraction over being
surveying the gulf of imponderability,
wishing for not seeing.

Staring into the waters,
at the black sun of suicide's rise
*Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky,
so I felt.*
through the breaks, submerging merging,
closing eyes in early March harbor water.

And the sky went wan, and the wind came cold ...

And Teachout lost and Cuomo destabilized rents
and I, I will die penniless
and the recentring dregs from each U.S. municipality
will emigrate to chat distilleries and code for Pinterest and Etsy
and on the bright side,
nothing.

Spalding Gray,
he went back and forth all night on the ferry.

And me
how long do I go?

Back and forth on the ferry.
Back and forth on the ferry.

*It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall,
The dark threw its patches down upon me also.*

Gray's anatomy bobbing, grey in cobalt, gulls circling.

Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face!

Closer yet I approach you.

Back and forth on the ferry.

My friend scrambling for money.

Back and forth on the ferry.

Me in the window, old, now, oldering.

Back and forth on the ferry.

*I too had receiv'd identity by my body,
That I was I knew was of my body,*

*and what I should be I knew
I should be of my body.*

My identity isn't just a lunacy
I can choose to, or not to, be.

Ohio, manipulation, domination, and greed;
poverty, self-loathing, narcissism—it's me;
arrogance, my condescending lack of interest;
whiteness, maleness, heterocisness,
my needs, my psychology—
it's in my body. It is bodily.

I can't even trust the look of me—

I stole books from the Occupy Wall Street library.

The current rushing so swiftly and swimming with me far away.

And the dawn came soon...

and it was forever freeing,
an end to all my endless feelings;
no more richers, and I ain't never gonna see
no more ceilings.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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QUOTATIONS & ALLUSIONS

Epigraph: Fiona Apple, “This world is bullshit...” from Apple’s 1997 MTV VMAs acceptance speech for her Best New Artist award.

Epigraph: Osama Bin Laden, “...if there are any brothers...” quoted in Robyn Creswell and Bernard Haykel’s “Battle Lines: Want to understand the jihadis? Read their poetry,” *The New Yorker*, June 8, 2015.

Page 5: “You Can Live Forever on a Paradise Earth,” taken from *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, a Jehovah’s Witness text published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society in 1982. 81 million copies were printed.

Page 11: “I ain’t afraid to love a man. I ain’t afraid to shoot him either.” Attributed to Annie Oakley, possibly apocryphal.

Page 13: “*Cogito ergo sum*,” (I think, therefore I am.) Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, 1637.

Page 18: “*Il faut confronter les idées vagues avec des images claires*,” (One must confront vague ideas with clear images.) Jean-Luc Godard, *La Chinoise* (1967).

Page 21: “...war is an extension of politics...” paraphrase of Carl von Clausewitz, “War is merely the continuation of policy by other means,” *On War*, 1832.

Page 26: “...And, friends...” and “...some inner resources?” John Berryman, “Dream Song 14,” *Dream Songs*, 1969.

Page 26: “...no one left to lie to.” The title of Christopher Hitchens’s 1999 anti-Clinton polemic *No One Left to Lie To: The Triangulations of William Jefferson Clinton*.

Page 33: “...innocent fraud...” and “That is that.” John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Economics of Innocent Fraud: Truth for Our Time*, 2004.

Page 34: “...if it ain’t about the money...” T.I. featuring Young Thug, “About the Money,” 2014.

Page 35: “Imagine the sound of debt.” “This project is

about visualizing debt.” “Debt isolates you as a subject in capitalism.” All three quotes are from Cassie Thornton. cassiehornton.com

Page 38: The ending section beginning with “They’re drunk again...” is a rewrite of the Letters to the Moon song “Degrees of Separation.” “But I’m drunk again / I’m calling you / I’m not sure what / I’m trying to do.”

Page 39: This poem is a play on the title of Gabby Bess’s *Alone with Other People*.

Page 41: “CLEAN FOR GENE!” Eugene McCarthy’s campaign slogan targeting long-hairs during the 1968 Democratic Primary race.

Page 42: “Q.) And babies? A.) And babies.” U.S. soldier Paul Meadlo interviewed by Mike Wallace on CBS News in 1969 regarding the My Lai Massacre. Text taken from *The New York Times*, later incorporated into a now-famous anti-war poster by the Art Workers Coalition.

Page 43: “...homemade speed...” Blatz, “Homemade Speed,” *The Shit Split*, 1994.

Page 45: “All I see is signs...” Rihanna, “Pour It Up,” *Unapologetic*, 2012.

Page 47: “Abolition of Family–Creation of a New Love,” a section title from a 2013 Michael Hardt lecture at OSU in Columbus, Ohio, titled the *ABCs of Communism*.

Page 51: “Who taught you to hate yourself?” el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz (Malcolm X), an excerpt from a speech Malcolm X gave on May 5, 1962 at the funeral service of Ronald Stokes, who was murdered by the LAPD. Must see: youtu.be/gRSgUTWffMQ

Page 57: “The best of all possible worlds,” is a concept Gottfried Leibniz put forth in 1710’s *Théodicée* in order to solve the philosophical problem of evil. Leibniz argued that God introduced evil to the world because it brings out the best aspects of humanity, and therefore, the world would be worse off without it. Voltaire tars this idea in *Candide*, 1762.

Page 58: “Profit creates jobs...” This is the inscription on the James A. Rhodes statue in front of the James A. Rhodes State Office Tower in Columbus, Ohio.

Page 59: "They're worse than the Brownshirts..." Governor James A. Rhodes said this about student activists on May 3, 1970, the day before he ordered the National Guard to fire on the Kent State protesters.

Page 62: "They were the best of times, they were the end of times." A.J. Fusco, 2011. ajfusco.com

Page 65: "A surprising number of human beings..." Peter Weir, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975).

Page 68: "Got the life," Korn, "Got the Life," *Follow the Leader*, 1998.

Page 69: The LinkedIn quotes are taken verbatim from Franny Lazarus's LinkedIn page.

Page 70: "There's nothing surer..." Van and Schenck, "Ain't We Got Fun?," 1920.

Page 71: "...just another word for 'nothing left to lose.'" Janis Joplin; Kris Kristofferson, "Me and Bobby McGee," *Pearl*, 1971.

Page 73: "Ohio State, Harvard it Ain't." An aged German aristocrat said this to me upon meeting me on the first day of my internship in the Art Institute of Chicago's Prints and Drawings Room.

Page 74: "THE CVLTVRED MIND..." This is the inscription above the front doors to OSU's Hayes Hall, which used to be its Art History building, originally constructed in 1893.

Page 76: The section beginning "...shall be no more..." is an interpolation of Revelation 21:4, *The Bible*. "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Page 80: "...sea to shining sea..." Katharine Lee Bates, "America the Beautiful," 1895-1910.

Page 88: "Oh, please, leave the *ventana* open," and "*Yo te quiero infinito*," are both from The Clash's "Spanish Bombs," *London Calling*, 1979.

Page 88: "...wine-dark sea..." Homer, *The Illiad and The Odyssey*, 8th Century B.C.

Page 93: “Never Buy, Never Sell,” is a corruption of Black Label Skateboards’s motto “Never Be Bought, Never Be Sold, and Never Forget,” 1991.

Page 105: *The Heart of the Matter* is the title of a 1948 Graham Greene novel.

Page 111: “Drink, fight, and fuck.” G.G. Allin, “Drink, Fight, and Fuck,” *Eat My Fuc*, 1984.

Page 115: “Sorels,” as in the character Julien Sorel in Stendhal’s 1830 novel *The Red and the Black*.

Page 121: This poem is a play on the first lines of Karl Marx’s *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852. “Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce.”

Page 139: The title of this poem is taken from Richard Aldington’s 1912 poem, “To a Greek Marble.”

Page 145: “I’m a little dinosaur,” Jonathan Richman and the Modern Lovers, “I’m a Little Dinosaur,” 1977. “Some day I’ll be dignified...,” The Modern Lovers, “Dignified and Old,” *The Modern Lovers*, 1976.

Page 151: Throughout “Crossing Staten Island Ferry” text from Walt Whitman’s 1855 poem “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” Edna St. Vincent Millay’s 1919 poem “Requedo,” and Emma Lazarus’s 1883 sonnet “The New Colossus,” are interspersed.

Page 154: “Comedy is tragedy plus time.” Woody Allen, *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989).

Page 157: The text concerning Spalding Gray owes much to Oliver Sacks’s article “The Catastrophe: Spalding Gray’s brain injury,” in the April 27, 2015 issue of *The New Yorker*.

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Joshua Tree National Park: A History of Preserving the Desert, a National Park Service Report.

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Page 138: “A Hellenistic Marble Group of a God and Goddess, probably Rhodian, circa late 2nd/early 1st Century B.C.” from a private art collection.

Page 150: “Head Statue of Liberty, Paris 1878: The Statue of Liberty’s head, on exhibit at the Paris Exposition of 1878” by Albert Fernique. Published in 1883 in Frederic Bartholdi’s *Album des Travaux de Construction de la Statue Colossale de la Liberte destinee au Port de New-York (Paris)*. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons & the Library of Congress.

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REALLY AREN'T

James Payne (b. 1986) lives in Bloomington, IN.

Things Just Aren't They, James Payne's first full-length poetry collection, is an incendiary and comic lament for the deformation of self under capitalism. Primarily situated in the Midwestern city of Columbus, Ohio, Payne's poems disentangle the processes of power permeating cultural spaces—office, gallery, university, and punk scene—in a voice moving between polemicist and romantic; satirist and true believer.

Through exhaustive alluding and detailing, Payne re-historicizes, re-politicizes, and re-constructs our present moment, pulling it from the wake of an era characterized as post-historical and apolitical. In *Things Just Aren't They* it is 2015, 1968, 1789, 1492, and *You Are Here Now*, bearing a palimpsest of years, riven inexplicably into consciousness, body, sex, race, class, city, society, country, history, identity, and asking, overtly or not—*Why are we here?* Payne's poems orbit that impossible question, shooting off like light in every direction in an attempt to elucidate, change the route, and reframe the narrative until it's within reach to erase.

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