INDEX

Reed Altemus p. 2
Editorial p. 3
W.M. Sutherland p. 3
Richard Kostelanetz p. 4
Heather Hermant p. 6
Carol Stetser p. 7
Opal L. Nations p. 8
Reed Altemus p. 13
William Davison/New Erotics p. 14
bill bissett p. 16
W.M. Sutherland p. 18
Henryk Skwar p. 20
Helen Lovekin p. 24
Norman Lock p. 25
Brian Panhuyzen p. 26
Stan Rogal p. 28
Steven R. Smith p. 30
Brian Cullen p. 32
Istvan Kantor p. 33
Michael Winkler p. 34
Evelyn Lau p. 36
Christian Burgaud p. 37
Jason Camlot p. 38
Donato Mancini p. 41
Katerina Fretwell p. 42
Andrea Nicki p. 42
Dorothea Grünsweig/Derk Wynand p. 42
Bryan Sentes p. 43
Mark Farrell p. 43
Vittori Baroni p. 44
Desi di Nardo p. 45
No Institute p. 46
B.Z. Niditch p. 47
CMPA p. 48
EDITORIAL

In this issue of *Rampike* we offer sensory input primarily for the eyes and ears. The three muses of music, writing and visual arts inform the manifold expressions here. William Davison discusses his adventures in music with the “New Erotics,” while Opal L. Nations presents an informative essay on the life and times of gospel singer Mahalia Jackson. And visual artists Christian Burgaud, Carol Stetser, Helen Lovekin, W.M. Sutherland, and Reed Altemus regale us with their striking visual graphics. Stan Rogal contributes a full one-act play, Istvan Kantor declares a manifesto on Neoism, and Michael Winkler presents his unique discovery of the visual sub-structure of language itself. Authors Richard Kostelanetz, bill bissett, Steve R. Smith, Henryk Skwar, Evelyn Lau, Norman Lock, and others proffer remarkable new poetry and fiction. Our highly valued consort of international contributors, too many to be named in this brief editorial, present amusing and amazing stimuli for your collective nerve-endings. All of this, with and eye and an ear towards sense and sensuality. We hope you’ll revel in these post-modern encounters, and we offer heartfelt and gracious thanks to our many friends, contributors and readers for nearly twenty-five years of on-going support! Salut! -- *Karl Jirgens*

Graphic image “Instruction Sheet” by W.M. Sutherland (Canada)
REROUTINGS
by Richard Kostelanetz

“Poetry has from the earliest times engaged in play with suffixes; but only in modern poetry, and particularly in Klebnikov, has the device become conscious, and as it were, legitimate.”
-- Roman Jakobson, “The Newest Russian Poetry: Velemir Klebnikov” (1921)
IN  WIND
SEE  SEED  FAT  FATE
RIP  RIPE  HOW  SHOW
MOP  MOPE  DOT  DOTE
NOT  SNOT  HOP  HOPE
ASS  MASS  TOKE  TOKEN
BID  BIDE  CHAR  CHART
TILT  STILT  AD  BAD  BADE
SHAM  SHAME  CAR  CARE  CARET
RUDE  CRUDE  TUMBLE  STUMBLE
WEE  WEED  AN  MAN  MOAN
RAVE  RAVEN  EAR  HEAR  SHEAR
LIGHTBLIGHT  AN  WAN  WANE
CAN  CANE  CANED  ARE  HARE  SHARE
AM  LAM  CLAM  EAR  EARL  EARLY
AIL  NAIL  SNAIL  ATE  PATE  SPATE
LUG  LUGE  LUGER  AESTHETIC  ANESTHETIC
PAN  Pane  PANEL  ASH  CASH  CRASH
ARK  HARK  SHARK  IN  KIN  KIND
HE  HER  HERE  THERE  BAR  BARE  BARRE
                       OR  ORE  MORE  MORES
READING _Beaufort Sea_
(for Al Purdy and Neil Follett)
by Heather Hermant

remembering dear friend in dream's expanse
moments of wide-armed

growing up spirit shaking
recollection initiation

swinging freight on rails
chain-linked fence rusts

Guthrie's voice blending American
eventually

into recitation of love
easy to hop

for Eurithe
like rush of first shout

(ready to cry
Kick The Can!
at his appreciation
collect it all in trail storming wide-eyed

for the little gold hairs on her belly
eighteen year-old virgin to life nipples

and next book folded across heart
hard as sun dogs down beneath the surface

_Necropsy of Love_
Necropsy of Love
impossibility under

without question spoken
the soles of our feet

from memory
secret carried eighty-two years hence

eyes up at her loving looking
Glimmer in back of eyeballs

for approval and)

suddenly the world
even after glass has fallen

especially these northern north of
window from its frame

forty-nine expanses
crushed by passing

so populated with proud silence and
on forgotten cement

despair become we

springs new as hairlines recede

want to travel across
greylines proceed singing

naked with possibility dream and summer
this man is 82 years old

welling tear-filled sacred anxious
but he's a 26 year-old child friend to me

and joyful in mouth-eyes

so we pack suitcase-

to those history places of future
dreams head tentless with raincoats to Trenton

record it all
Vernon Broadview Hawk Junction the Soo

under nails
Budapest Paris Aruban moons

on nose hairs

spit a hundred times into wind

never learning practicality

further faster to Kent Peninsula

seems we're anchored by starting

reaching for the Beaufort sea
Graphic image from “Traces of Man” by Carol Stetser (USA)
MAHALIA JACKSON, (1944-46)
The War Years / "Wilderness" Years
by Opal Louis Nations

In this essay, long-time Rampike correspondent Opal Louis Nations draws on his extensive experience in the music industry to offer this concise portrait of WW2 and the life of celebrated gospel singer Mahalia Jackson. Nations, who lives in California, has worked for years in radio and has hosted many programs including shows featuring doo-wop and gospel music. This portrayal draws important connections between gospel, the war effort, the music industry and literature, including responses from important writers of the time, such as Langston Hughes.

I, Too
I, too, sing America.
I am the darker brother
They send me to eat in the Kitchen
When company comes.
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.
Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
 Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

-- Langston Hughes from Dream Keeper & Other Poems (1926)

As Europeans were drawing up plans for the European invasion of Germany in 1943, the people of the United States were suffering their own form of civil unrest. Race riots broke out in Detroit on June 21, leaving thirty-four dead and seven hundred injured. Riots on a smaller scale also disrupted Harlem where six people lost their lives. African Americans and other minorities had grown increasingly impatient with a government who dragged its feet over issues of discrimination. One minor victory, however, was written into law when war contractors were barred from racial discrimination. World War II had stimulated the U.S. economy to such an extent that African Americans left the South in droves. The promise of a better life brought many to Chicago where the average unskilled annual wage was more than a thousand dollars, and to Detroit where many labored in the auto plants for almost twice that amount per annum. This tripled whatever average wage was made in Southern states like Mississippi.

On the black musical entertainment front Thomas A. Dorsey's old buddy, Tampa Red (Hudson Whittaker), was enjoying enormous success with the release of his risqué blues on Bluebird Records, "Let me play with your poodle." On a more somber note, the Mills Brothers were winning legions of fans with Johnny S. Black's "Paper doll" recorded for Decca. The movie "Casablanca" with its wartime motif swept up the most Academy Awards while on the gospel music front the pioneering Golden Gate Quartet caught notices for tunes like "Comin' in on a wing & a prayer" and "Stalin wasn't stallin'." The Four Vagabonds kept everyone's spirits up with "Rosie the Riveter", and Louis Tordan turned our attention away from the war effort with his humorous musical sketch of "Five guys named Moe."

By now, through the groundbreaking work of the Roberta Marin Singers who had embodied the choral and solo style of the "classic" era of gospel music, the great soloists began to come to the fore. A few examples of these were:
· Mahalia Jackson, the legendary "shout" gospel diva, based in Chicago, who had traveled throughout the nation with the first gospel-beat group, the Johnson Singers, and who had later ventured forth with pianist / composer Thomas A. Dorsey to promote his songs;
· Brother Toe May, "the gospel Caruso," the great Mother Willie Mae Ford Smith's protégé;
· Alex Bradford who spread the word and stylistic arrangements of Roberta and Sallie Martin's music around Army training camps during the War; · Robert Anderson, trained by Roberta Martin; · Ernestine B. Washington who was greatly influenced by pione sor soloist / pianist, Arizona Dranes;
· the guitar-slinging Sister Rosetta Tharpe who had fronted the Lucky Millinder Orchestra singing and playing "Shout sister shout" to secular audiences;
· Philadelphia's Clara Ward with the Ward Singers who was greatly influenced by Queen C. Anderson;
· Clara Hudmon, otherwise known as "The Georgia Peach";
Both Dinah Washington and Della Reese had served in the Roberta Martin Singers. The aggregation always kept its ranks open to receive and train young, promising and talented singers who happened to pass through Chicago, the focal point of the new "gospel" music. Promoter and producer John Hammond did much during this time to try to bring artists like the Golden Gate Quartet and the Dixie Hummingbirds into the commercial performing arena. The bastions of the black church, who at first resisted the gospelization of church music, also frowned upon any notion of taking God's music into the nightclub. Both Clara Ward and Della Reese were pioneers in this regard.

In 1943 Dorsey wrote two outstanding gospel compositions, "If we never needed the Lord before, we sure do need him now" and "The Lord will make a way somehow." The latter song was launched by the Ward Singers at the 1943 National Baptist Convention in Chicago. The week-long convention, co-founded by Thomas A. Dorsey, was held in a different city location each year. Gospel composer Lucie Campbell was in charge of A & R. Not only did artists and choirs perform, workshops and lectures were set up. Booths displayed promotional material. Pictures, recordings and sheet music were put on sale. Convention evenings were heated with sermons. At this point in time, Lucie Campbell did not have a high esteem for Mahalia Jackson's music. She thought Mahalia represented a lower culture and always pushed her off the big programs. Lucie placed her on the early morning recitals when she would be seen by as few delegates as possible.

Many of the gospel singers on the program had their "makeovers" done at Mahalia Jackson's beauty shop at 3726 South Prairie, on Chicago's South Side. The Ward Singers were no exception. Clara described Mahalia's technique for pressing and croconoling (deep waving) hair, more permanent than any method found anywhere. Mahalia had devised a pomade from a formula known only to herself and her husband. "Her magic fingers," said Clara "were only rivaled by her Creole cooking."

Mahalia Jackson had quit touring to head up the choir at St. Luke's Baptist, just around the corner from where she rented a four-room suite. Helen Green served as Mahalia's pianist. The great Robert Anderson sometimes gave recitals. Mahalia Jackson found she scarce had time for a quiet moment. Her time and resources were taken up by singing on concerts in support of Alderman Wm. L. Dawson, dealing with the financial extravagances of her bookie husband, Isaac "Ike" Hackenhull, managing the choir and beauty shop, plus the occasional trip out of town to fill in engagements. Any thought of improving her tight financial situation by making commercial recordings for a major label was thwarted by the fact that the American Federation of Musicians had called a membership strike in support of a fund for retired musicians. The union wanted the major record companies to set aside a portion of a record's retail sale price to pay for all this. The strike dragged on for two years, with some record companies conceding months before others. All this resulted in a flood of small, independent recordings by a number of unknown artist on a flourish of new labels.

One day, Ike made a bunch of money at the track and put down a first month payment on a new white fancy-looking Buick for Mahalia. But Ike never kept up the payments, so Mahalia took them over. One of the first trips in the new Buick was with her pianist Helen Green and her close friend, singer Brother John sellers to a Sunday concert in Detroit at Cass High School. She bought the building at 3726/28 Prairie and rented it out as six apartments to pay for it. She kept the downstairs with a large living room for herself. In the end, Mahalia's Buick was repossessed. Her husband had made a loan against the car and had gambled away the money. Shortly after this Mahalia filed for divorce.

The amazing Joe Louis was midway through his twelve-year reign as heavyweight champion of the world. Most African Americans were notably proud of his achievement. However, this did not make up for the slurs and other racial innuendos leveled against black servicemen and women, especially those in Naval uniform. To combat discrimination, various Federal agencies were directed by the government to develop radio programming to address the race issue in a progressive manner and to show African Americans in a positive light. One such program was "Men o' War," a patriotic weekly musical revue produced by the U.S. Navy. Another was the ambitious "Freedom's People" put on by the U.S. Office of Education. William Robson's CBS special, "Open Letter on Race Hatred" won the prestigious Peabody Award for broadcasting excellence.

Mahalia Jackson brought her close friend, the great Sister Ernestine B. Washington, down from Brooklyn, New York for a big program she had planned at St. Luke's Baptist. Ernestine was riding high on the popularity of her recordings, like Lucie Campbell's adaptation of "The Lord is my shepherd" and the epochal "I've come through the water and the flood." Washington, who possessed a voice of immense power, was born in Little Rock and was strongly influenced by Arizona Dranes, the pioneer blind singer and pianist from Texas.

Both Mahalia and Robert Anderson sang on the program, and Blind James Frances, keyboard graduate of Southern University, accompanied on piano. The program did not go well for Mahalia. Frances had not followed
instructions. In the gospel songwriting business, Kenneth Morris was perhaps Dorsey's closest rival in terms of popular usage. Morris's "He's a burden bearer," "I'm walking with my Jesus," and "I want to go where Jesus is" were extremely popular among singers like Mahalia Jackson.

Mahalia made a habit of supporting her friends on their church programs, especially Brother John Sellers. She also made the rounds of the Holiness churches where she would sing as well as extemporize with the odd off-the-cuff sermon. There was one Sunday evening communion service Mahalia always tried to participate in and never missed. This was the extremely dramatic and all hell-raising recitations given by Rev. Elijah Thurston at the Forty-Fourth Street Baptist Church on the first Sunday of each month. After Sister Washington's concert at St. Luke's, reciprocal arrangements were made for Mahalia to sing at the Trinity Temple in Montclair, New Jersey. This was Mahalia's first trip to the New York area. She was well received. People admired her for her character and her free spirit.

Over in Harlem, experimental be-bop was in full flower. African Americans tried to cope with their anger in dealing with inequality for a moment by heading over to the Apollo Theatre to catch Earl Hines, Dizzie Gillespie, Charlie Parker and Little Benny Harris as they pushed the boundaries of jazz beyond the limits of conventional structure and form.

Mahalia returned to Chicago and organized a benefit for St. Luke's Baptist. This time she invited her friend of long standing, Sister Rosetta Tharpe. Tharpe was a controversial figure among church folk at the time. The more conservative members of the church frowned on Tharpe's use of the Bible as entertainment and her appearances at such venues as Chicago's Regal Theatre. But Mahalia understood that Sister Rosetta Tharpe had a special way of conveying her beliefs to her church-going fans. The concert was packed to overflowing, and Mahalia, upon explicit instructions from fire marshals, was forced to put people outside. After the concert Mahalia gave a supper for Rosetta at Morrison's Eat Shop on south Forty Seventh Street. The Defender tabloid photographed Mahalia and Rosetta outside the restaurant's side entrance. To create public interest, the paper published the shot with the caption "Mahalia Jackson at the Rum Boogie opening with her friend Sister Rosetta Tharpe."

The Rum Boogie nightclub was about to open its doors right next to the restaurant. The inflamed Rev. Smith of the Ebenezer Baptist, where Mahalia made regular appearances, Rev. Cobb and others were outraged. All put a stop to Mahalia ever singing at their places of worship. Mahalia tried to make the paper retract, but the damage was done. Mahalia's only support came from the female storefront spiritualist preacher Rev. Barnes. Barnes had a regular radio broadcast, and she invited Mahalia who sang Rosalie McKenny's "I'm gonna tell God all about it one of these days." This song was also one of the first Mahalia recorded for Apollo in 1946.

Rosetta was sorely distressed by the outcome of the nightclub incident and tried to get Jack Kapp at Decca Records in New York to record Mahalia again. But Decca turned her down. Snubbed by both the church and deprived of the chance to break through on record, Mahalia chose the road she had travelled before: the arduous and grueling blood, sweat and tears of the Southern revival circuit, to suffer the heat and low pay and to endure the mosquito bites under the gospel tent off the side of the road in the grass.

Leaving Celestine "Polly" Belt in charge of the store, Mahalia took to the road with the thirteen-year-old Dellareece Taliaferro (Della Reese) who replaced the sick Barbara Penson on a string of venues including June dates for the National Sunday School Congress and fall dates for the National Baptist Convention. Summer in between would be taken up with revival services. The young and precocious Della had by this time worked her way up to Youth Choir Director at Detroit's Church of Faith. Mahalia, who had traveled to Detroit on a concert tour, taught Della soloing at her church and was greatly impressed with her voice and the way she carried herself. Mahalia promised Della's mother that she would keep her charge on a tight leash. This she did, against bouts of much struggle and squabble. But Della began to admire Mahalia for her single-mindedness and professional ability to communicate with her audience.

Mahalia's entourage, which included singer Celeste Scott, Dorsey's close associate, pastor, composer and choir director Theodore R. Frye, Della, and soloist Robert Anderson, headed due east through Cleveland and Pittsburgh to Philadelphia. They then headed southwest into Kentucky where they played tents, churches and concert halls along the way. Travelling east from Kentucky into Virginia, the group tuned their radio into current news events. Allied forces were invading Europe at Normandy while the Democrats were re-nominating Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Republicans, Governor Thomas E. Dewey, for the full presidential elections.

On the way south into Tennessee, little Della had her first taste of what it was like to be black in the Jim Crow backwaters of the Southlands. Plus the added frustrations of always worrying about a pop tire, redneck police officers who would stop you along the highway and taunt you for no good reason or to turn you around. Eateries that refused to serve blacks or would have a small door around the back where the garbage cans stood full of offal.
Hotels that refused to rent rooms to blacks. Knots of white trash in cars following behind, taunting, threatening, and leaning on car horns. Having little money, being victims of crooked promoters who skipped with the take, living like wards of the church, renting hovels and sleeping all in one bed, running out of or refused gas and being stranded on a dark road late at night, living on cheap canned meat, being lost on the road and too afraid to stop and ask the way, being stranded on a back road due to dense fog -- all this they had to endure.

From Nashville the party headed south through Birmingham and Montgomery into Mobile, then northwest on to Jackson, Mississippi via Route 90 through Gulfport. Leaving Jackson they headed west to Fort Worth. One night at a particularly crowded revival service in Forth Worth, Mahalia stood working the crowd with a gut-wrenching rendition of Roberta Martin's arrangement of "Even me," as was her custom, when an elderly man hobbled towards her at the edge of the pulpit. Mahalia, not knowing whether the man was drunk or at ecstasy's door, pulled back. "I can walk," he said. "And it's because of you," he added. The man was surrounded by people who supported his claim. He had been taken to the concert paralyzed, and now he could walk for the first time in two decades.

After a surge of awe Mahalia said, "The Lord saved you, not I. He was using me as his instrument. For this you should get on your knees and bless him every day." Mahalia always insisted on being her God's servant and never considered herself a healer, as many spiritualist ministers, black and white, professed.

Like the crippled man who rose up and walked, an open rebellion was taking place in black American letters at this time. The Godfather of the Harlem Renaissance, Langston Hughes, who was at this point writing a weekly column in The Chicago Defender and who had attended Theodore R. Frye's church, published the scathing poem "Jim Crow's Last Stand," an attack on segregation. The first two verses ran as follows:

There was an old Crow by the name of Jim.  
The Crackers were in love with him.  
They liked him so well they couldn't stand  
To see Jim Crow get out of hand.  
But something happened.  
Jim's feathers fell.  
Now that Crow's begun to look like hell.  
Pearl Harbor put Tim Crow on the run.  
That Crow can't fight for Democracy  
And be the same old Crow he used to be  
Although right now, even yet today,  
He still tries to act in the same old way.  
But India and China and Harlem, too,  
Have made up their minds Jim Crow is through.  
Nehru said, before he went to jail,  
Catch that Jim Crow bird, pull the feathers out of his tail!  
Marian Anderson said to the DAR,  
I'll sing for you - but drop that color bar.  
Paul Robeson said, out in Kansas City.  
To Jim Crow my people is a pity.  
Mrs. Bethune told Martin Dies,  
You ain't telling nothing but your Jim Crow lies –  
If you want to get old Hitler's goat,  
Abolish poll tax so folks can vote.  
Joe Louis said, We gonna win this war  
Cause the good Lord knows what we're fighting for!  
-- Langston Hughes (1943)

On what were then considered the "race" charts, Nat King Cole, the Ink Spots, Duke Ellington, Louis Jordan and Ella Fitzgerald dominated the music industry. But only Dorsey and Kenneth Morris continued to compose a significant number of gospel tunes, among which were Dorsey's "I'll never turn back" and Morris's "Yes, God is real." Both were recorded by Mahalia in later years.

In the meantime, Allied bombing in Europe, which included considerable tonnage from the U.S., rose to a crescendo. On the escapist front, "Going my way," a movie starring Bing Crosby, full of heart-tugging sentimentality, scooped up an armful of Oscars.

Upon her return to St. Luke's Mahalia found herself forgiven to an extent as ministers on the South and West sides invited her onto church programs. Highlights included Rev. Elijah Thurston's evening service and 11 p.m. broadcast, plus Rev. Cole's (Nat's father's) ministry up near Waukegan in North Chicago. Come 1945, Louis Jordan,
Duke Ellington, Nat Cole and the Mills Brothers continued to dominate the juke boxes alongside Lucky Millinder, Jimmie Lunceford and Wynonie Harris. Mahalia's close friend Sister Rosetta Tharpe rocked into people's hearts and minds with her widely popular "Strange things happening every day" on Decca. Roosevelt died and Germany surrendered.

Meanwhile Mahalia labored on in spring revivals with Rosalie McKenny, her accompanist. Back home she played on programs at Progressive Baptist and Tulare Baptist but rarely headlined. Victory had brought a renewed interest in gospel music. Promoters began to pay performers a percentage of the take, this made gospel troubadors like Mahalia increasingly aggressive. The more she promoted herself, the better off she would be. She sold tickets to her own concerts and before she went on stage counted the house to make sure nobody had snuck in. Her entourage was almost stranded in Tyler, Texas when an attendant refused to sell them gas. But they made it home.

Then came services at The Greater Salem and The Greater Harvest before planning the summer revival. This summer the revival road included the usual Chicago circuit followed by dates in Detroit with James Cleveland. In Detroit she met black gospel promoter Johnny Meyers, the best known operator in New York. Meyers offered Mahalia a thousand dollars to appear once in the fall at New York's prestigious Golden Gate Ballroom (Auditorium), an honor in view of the fact that most black entertainers were refused most white "palaces." While in Detroit she visited with the Rev. Charles Franklin and his young four-year-old prodigy, Aretha. This was Della Reese's last revival. Mahalia complained that the sixteen-year-old needed almost constant supervision and that she was unable to give it. But Mahalia always treated Della as if she were her own child, her own flesh and blood, even though this meant the parting of the ways, Mahalia continued over time to look upon her relationship with Della as one of parent and child. Mahalia's appearance at The Golden Gate marked the end of the "wilderness years" for Mahalia. Sitting in the audience was Bess Berman, proprietor of Apollo Records. With the signing of Mahalia to her label, Berman helped Mahalia find a fresh start and a broader audience, one which included lifelong friend "Studs" Louis Terkel who in 1947 found Mahalia and put her on his radio show, "The Wax Museum" over WENR. Terkel introduced Mahalia as "the woman from the South Side with the golden voice" and played her recordings. Slowly but surely Mahalia's star ascended and eventually the whole world would paid attention.

Glory! Hallelujah!
The dawn's a-comin'!
Glory! hallelujah!
The dawn's a-comin'!
A black old woman croons
In the amen-corner of the
Ebecaneezer Baptist Church.
A black old woman croons
The dawn's a-comin'!

-- Langston Hughes, from “Prayer Meeting”

Books cited:
5. We'll Understand It Better (By & By) - Edited by Bernice Johnson Reagon Smithsonian Institution (1992).
Graphic image by Reed Altemus (USA) “Typestyler Poem #3”
tiny gifts

a performance by
SONGS OF THE NEW EROTICS
as revealed in photographic documents by S.Higgins
Text, layout and design by W.A.Davison
Brought to you courtesy of the
Dept. Of Recordist Events And Situations
International Bureau of Recordist Investigation
“tiny gifts” - a performance by SONGS OF THE NEW EROTICS
Gladstone Hotel, Toronto, Nov. 3, 2001

“tiny gifts” was presented as part of a cross-Canada performance art exchange project called Reciprocité/Reciprocité. Three artists from each of three Canadian cities - Montréal, Toronto, and Vancouver - were asked to present site-specific performances in each city. Participating artists included Josée Tremblay, Eric Létourneau, and Victoria Stanton from Montréal; Paul Couillard, Shannon Cochrane, and William Davison (aka Songs of the New Erotics) from Toronto; Tagny Duff, Margaret Dragu, and Kirsten Forkert from Vancouver/Richmond. On Oct. 31/01, these nine artists occupied the Elie Corazon storefront at 176 Bernard Ouest, Montréal. On Nov. 3/01, the group presented pieces in various rooms and spaces at the Gladstone Hotel in downtown Toronto. The Vancouver segment of the project is set to take place on tour buses running between Vancouver and Richmond, B.C. in early Sept. 2002.

“tiny gifts” was a three-hour solo performance which combined experimental and improvised sound (pre-taped and live) with various performance art actions and interactions involving the audience/visitors, residents of the hotel, and the space itself.

The performance was divided into two sections. The first section was one hour in length and involved the performer moving through the various spaces of the hotel - hallways and stairwells, washrooms, the main lobby, and outside around the hotel’s perimeter and back alley - armed with a flashlight, cigar box, rubber gloves and surgical tweasers, collecting various bits of debris and detritus (cigarette butts, rusty nails, screws, bottle caps, broken glass, string, feathers, twigs and so on).

The second section was two hours in length and took place entirely within one of the rooms of the hotel. It involved various actions such as playing violin, staring at a painting, obsessive mark making, playing 78s on an old record player, sitting for long periods of time or staring out the window, and of course interacting with the numerous visitors to the room. Some of these visitors (10 in total) received “tiny gifts” which consisted of a small glass jar containing one of the objects previously collected in and around the hotel.

An important element of the performance was the three-hour long soundtrack (specially composed for the piece by Songs of the New Erotics) which emanated from speakers hidden under the bed in the hotel room. The soundtrack consisted of strange and distant sounds (wind, muffled voices, tapping and scratching, electronic tones, trickling water, buzzing flies, etc.) which subtly provided atmosphere to the performance, sometimes blending into the ambient sounds of the hotel (traffic noises, rattling pipes, etc.) and other times filling the space with a dense cloud of sound.

The space was further modified with the addition of props such as a record player, violin case, pile of latex gloves, and a decaying “still life” painting.

Throughout the performance, the performer remained in costume and in “character” (the strange occupant of Room 50).

The accompanying photos illustrate various aspects of the piece:

1. Wandering the hallways of the Gladstone Hotel in search of interesting debris.
2. Examining an object found near the back stairwell. Note the careful handling with rubber gloves and tweasers.
3. In the back alley, seeking out more hidden gems.
4. Waiting patiently for visitors to arrive. Visible in this photo are the open violin case (at right, on the dresser) and the cigar box (on the bed) now filled with potential “gifts”.
5. Listening to 78’s at 16 rpm (in this instance, “Pop Goes The Mambo” and “Oh Dear, What Can The Mambo Be?” by Stanley Black and his Orchestra. Incidentally, the tune from “Pop Goes The Weasel” has appeared in several other S.O.T.I.N.E. performances).
6. A visitor receives a “tiny gift”.
7. A little music to pass the time and entertain the visitors and passersby. Mostly scraping and high-pitched screeching actually.
8. Several minutes atop the bed, intently staring at a painting: an action repeated numerous times throughout the performance.
10. Saying goodnight.

Songs of the New Erotics is an experimental music and performance project, formed in 1991 and headed by Toronto-based artist William A. Davison. The project is an extension of Davison’s work with Recordism, an artistic ideology founded by Davison in 1984 and rooted in a re-evaluation of chance and automatism.

For more examples of S.O.T.I.N.E. works, as well as numerous other Recordist projects, visit the Virtual Bureau Of Recordism - website of the International Bureau of Recordist Investigation, available at www.recordism.com.

Songs of the New Erotics would like to thank the artists and organizers of Reciprocité/Reciprocité: In particular Paul Couillard, Josée Tremblay, Tagny Duff, and Margaret Dragu. S.O.T.I.N.E. also acknowledges the assistance (via Reciprocité/Reciprocité) of the Toronto Arts Council, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the Gladstone Hotel. Many thanks to S.Higgins for her work in documenting this and other S.O.T.I.N.E. performances; for the use of her photos here; and for her continued support and encouragement.

2 poems
by bill bissett

ium going 2 sleep now n i remembr th time -- part 1

eye answerd an ad i met him in a tim hortons he tuk me 2 his place in his veree sleek chrysler we drove in2 th undrground parking he usd his identi card onlee sticking it in a masheen that loomd ovr th drive way veree neer th great marbul doors if it wud b raining or snowing veree hard he onlee had 2 prop it up against th inside wind shield n th masheen like a giraffe wud bend ovr 2 klik itself against th card thru th glass 2 verify it n also photo ideed th prson holding th card not much cud reeel get past it he xplained 2 me n we slid our way down th ramp down bathd in glistning neon secresee he was squeezing my leg tightlee as he spoke thees words xhaling a numbr we wer sharing it was 4 me a welcum touch cumming softlee 2 a stop a veree klassee ride all my memoreez uv sex n love in cars ov th yeers we wer berthd in konkreet n steel far undr th erth away from th late july above ground xcessiv humiditee koold by th soothing air con dishyuning onlee in sum places in othr places yu cud not moov it was a wundrful feeling whn he put his hand on my leg was veree cool wer heer he sd we got out n all th doors kliking lockd tite as we left th vehikul n made our way 2 anothr door wch was an elevator that zoomd us i wud gess anothr 5 floors down in 2 th embraysing n cool erth was it waiting 4 us it was reeel opening its arms 2 us duz erth have feelings certinlee wev hurt erth just abt enuff prhaps mor thn erth can handul with our addicksyun 2 fosll fuels n our needs 2 hurt n destroy th ego uv our theokraiseez alone can send us 2 obliviuon we cant b kontent 4 long with love need inkreesd sway whatevr varieteeg fine ego a strangr fuck fine ego a littul bit can b xcellent 4 survival n religyun ego fine spiritualitee langwages sew beautiful ther was no answr aneemor 2 thees luvlee qwest yuns that bcame th answr no answr thos uv us who cud wer apparently hedding undrground b4 th konflagraysyun above gets wors certinlee th othrs whn we kompleteid our descent as littul at first as we saw uv them wer totalee redee 4 us th aroma uv incens n freshlee baked salmon n rice n curree was testimonee 2 that as wer theyr opn arms filld with trays uv partee favors no ths was not sumwheer harshlee sinistr sum wher 2 obleek 2 xpektaysuns yet it was secreetid obviouslee n i wud soon find out th reeons
whos text is it aneway

“...ideels n choices can create frustraysyuns can create bcoz uv xpektaysyuns .. caut in a see uv negativitee or self doubting cawing or arriving or kontinuing from obses yuns... dew yu evr feel like yu ar a talking vois or an x ray or a sketch may yu find sum othr text that can shake yu up yr ideaz uv anee stuk neurolojee a nu room say in th hotel uv yr brain suddnlee ther looking out ovr th changing rivr uv yr life with nu opsysuns n cells n transmittrs 2 accomodate th surprizing guests uv yr own unliknd points uv view ways 2 go uv yr veree own xperiences ...”

-- anstell brocker
Even though it women, many theological events are early experiences of modernity, just as the experiences of that day, any private, emerging, social, and discerning, are no longer modern, as interpreted, the common of modernity, rephrased, the difficulty of individuality, as interpreted, the tradition of eminence, the centrality of the, and only then, a subject, the only consequence of modernity, the ideal, and also, in a sense, as interpreted, the categories of the, the contemporary, and Thiers, and hence, also, if the contemporary is also, as something taken, mimetically, where they also, dissolution of the, anyway, and the
Graphic Image “The Myopic Voyeur (After Dick Higgins) by W.M. Sutherland (Canada)
THE STORY MY UNCLE NEVER TOLD ME
by Henryk Skwar

Chateau Bois-Renard, where my uncle spent almost half a century, is located in Bourgogne, in one of those charming places where people live to eat and taste wine. The key to understanding the locals is surely contained in the word le vignoble, and I never met anyone able to resist this captivating subject or deny that Providence had bestowed upon them a highly pleasurable existence summed up in the expression la douce France.

The rolling hills surrounding the chateau are covered with vineyards, where the work dictates the pace of life the whole year round, where farmers are good-natured and friendly as if they possessed the secret of our short existence. Their faces, marked by florid noses and cheeks, are a picture of our worst vices, including the ones devoted to food and drink--gluttony and inebriation.

My father's brother, who was neither a Frenchman, nor rich, lived in this marvellous place thanks to a friend, the owner of the chateau, whose life he had saved in the last great war. During a visit to Paris several years after my uncle's death, I received a letter from his benefactor Monsieur C., inviting me to Chateau Bois-Renard to go through my relative's papers, written mostly in his native language. The owner of the chateau wanted to avoid destroying something important. I agreed and quickly managed to make my plans reality.

It was late on a sunny Saturday afternoon that my train pulled into Auxerre, known for the beauty of its cathedral. My host's chauffeur was already waiting. On the country road we passed other vineyards and other chateaux dotting the landscape like mushrooms after a rain shower. The bucolic and harmonious arrangement of nature and man evokes feelings comparable only to those of a connoisseur when he admires a piece of art convinced of its value and place in the universe.

The avenue leading to Chateau Bois-Renard was lined with poplars, a rare sight in that part of the country. We arrived at a magnificent building which, as my guide confided, has at times housed close to a hundred guests. In one of the rooms the uncle I never met spent most of his life. Monsieur C., was waiting and, without ado, invited me to join him in the study, a spacious chamber with hundreds of books. At the window stood an oak table with a view of the road by which we had arrived a few minutes ago.

Monsieur C. was tall and well-shaven, with a noble forehead and unusually penetrating, but friendly, eyes. His countenance was the boyish and dignified one I later noticed in portraits of his ancestors. I was struck by the appearance of his hands with their elegantly shaped fingers adorned by no family signet or ring as a reminder of the tradition and splendour of the past.

The owner of the chateau seemed a man of principle and as uncomplicated and open as his position allowed him to be. He didn't try to hide the fact that my uncle had been his closest friend and he still felt indebted to him. Even my relative's death did not weaken Monsieur C.'s love for him and the world he had represented all the years of their friendship. After this introduction he requested me to select papers left by my uncle. I assured Monsieur C. that I would do my best and accompanied him to the room my uncle had used as a shelter from the noises of our world.

At supper Monsieur C. informed me that he was leaving the chateau for a few days, but that everything had been arranged to make my stay pleasant. The chauffeur, the maid, and the gardener were all aware of my being his guest, so, I should not hesitate to tell them of any desire. I had not intended to stay in the chateau longer than a day or two, but bowed to the will of my host, allowing him to manage my person as he saw fit.

I slept well that night and, probably because of the amount of fine wine I had consumed, woke up quite late. At breakfast the maid informed me that Monsieur C. had already left and that I had become acting master. I hid a smile because in my heart of hearts I had never had much respect for the aristocracy and its habits, but everything at Chateau Bois-Renard was so natural that I did not share my opinion with anyone.

When I had finished breakfast, I expressed a desire to see the park. The maid summoned the gardener. He had known my uncle well. One of the favorite habits of the deceased had been a game with birds. The gardener assured me that, no matter how fantastic it sounds, my uncle had been able to communicate with them. He had seemed to understand their language and spent many hours in this green paradise, when too many guests were staying at the chateau.

It was a pleasant day, which passed quickly, and the next morning I embarked on my task. After breakfast I retired to the room that had been my uncle's study and vigorously attacked the piles of his papers.

Among the letters I found one addressed to my father. It had never reached its destination, as it was sealed and had not been posted. I opened it and discovered that I was its subject. Written when was still a child, it referred
to the maxim of La Rochefoucauld pointing out that all our virtues are only vices in disguise. As an example my uncle mentioned the life of one of his university classmates which he promised to expound on in his next letter.

I assumed that because the letter had not been despatched he had never had the opportunity to write about this classmate--let me call him Barry--who later became such a great man in politics that his name could be found in any major reference book.

Going through the papers, I found the story of Barry as he had been before he became a public figure. The story encompassed a few pages, and I relate them to help you better comprehend what was in my uncle's mind when he tried to warn my father against any future interest of mine in politics. I shall let my uncle tell the story in the first person, to make it clearer.

I made Barry's acquaintance at the university. We both studied history, and we were both members of the rowing team. Among the people who took the course about the conquest of Constantinople based on the personal records of Geoffroy de Villehardouin and the Spanish Armada, I noticed a tall, blond young man, slightly stooped, with a sincere smile and hazel eyes. It was clear that he was an American from his way of speaking and wild gesticulations, rather bizarre among the British.

He was also a little less formally dressed than the rest of us. That might have been the result not of his attitude, but of a lack of time. He was the busiest person I had ever met. I don't mean to imply that his time was consumed by the hunger of the wisdom found in books. Barry once astonished me by quoting Boethius, but his knowledge of the world was distilled not from volumes of history but rather from everyday life.

I soon discovered that Barry had two great passions that he indulged at every opportunity: women and horse races. Both were related to his financial plight which was not particularly difficult but did not allow him to adequately stretch the wings of his fantasy. Barry insisted that every great man has passions and there is no discrepancy between them and the great deeds he is destined to achieve. He referred to Dostoyevsky and his gambling.

One thing was strikingly different about Barry's life. He never took part in our discussions about politics. I don't think that he had an aversion to the topic. Rather, he didn't have enough time for it. His only problems were his own existence and the difficulties attached to taming it.

As time passed, I became Barry's closest friend, though we didn't see each other too often. We occasionally met on weekends or walked together to our dormitory. These were good opportunities to talk, and I found Barry almost garrulous, though in the presence of others he was restrained if not silent. During our strolls he tried to formulate his philosophy of life.

He was convinced that a real philosopher is a man who is able to be financially independent. Daring risk to get big money should be a part of every life. The essence of politics being money, he appreciated politicians, who should, in his opinion, be considered the greatest of philosophers.

I was young then, so I tried to convince him that we have a duty which requires us to adhere to certain principles: otherwise, the world will turn into a jungle with no place to cultivate our sublime sentiments, no place for poetry and music, and no freedom because the solidarity between human beings will be broken and irrelevant, and so on, and so on.

I remember that he stopped on the path leading to the dormitory and looked at me amused by what I had said. He told me that he had watched me several times debating politics and now was certain that I really believe that politicians are interested in something other than money.

I was shocked. He noticed this and added that obviously history knows other cases but they are produced exclusively by circumstances like wars or revolutions. We reached the ancient dormitory building without other comments. Soon current events took precedence and our discussion faded into memory. In the meantime I found out more about his past and his family.

Barry came from California. His ancestors had arrived there during the gold rush almost a century ago. After years of hardship his grandfather had become co-owner of a timber company. Then he settled in one of the banana republics in Central America, and soon became part of the elite of his new country. The experience brought from California helped him establish one of the biggest companies in that part of the world. Dying as a victim of local upheavals, he left everything to his son.

Barry's father who returned to the United States was convinced that people who drink wine and dress well are different from the masses. Barry could still remember his saying that most of humanity is nothing but dirty, stupid cattle and that democracy was invented just to keep people ignorant.
Barry grew up a prodigal son. At fifteen he ran away from home and went to New York. There he had his first encounter with a woman. It pleased him so much that he spent most of the money he earned on his new hobby. After two years of living like a bohemian he returned home and reconciled with parents.

They decided that Barry should attend a European university. The choice fell on England. Father kept saying that it was time for America to build a new aristocracy that would, using the principle of democracy, lead the dark masses to a better future.

When Barry was one of my classmates, I watched him listening intently to our professor's analysis of Queen Elizabeth's address to her army at Tilbury. I didn't know then what destiny was awaiting him, but I had a vague presentiment that after the early rebellion against his parents he was becoming not necessarily better but more aware and more determined.

Besides women and horses, Barry had one more passion. It was hidden from the eyes of intruders, and without his explanation, even I would have been ignorant of it. He was intrigued by the ways people were taxed throughout history. He spent innumerable hours in our library devouring tomes on public finance. I remember that I bumped into him once as he was leaving the reading room greatly agitated. As we walked, he shared with me the, as he put it, discovery of his life.

In his opinion, taxation was a key to understanding the relationship between the enlightened and the ignorant. When the power of the ruler is absolute, there is no difficulty in imposing levies on each person because behind the throne is brute force. A wise ruler never exaggerates in this respect. Improper taxation leads to bloody upheavals and revolutions, as we well know.

In the parliamentary system the use of force against one's own society is out of the question. Theoretically, a proper tax system has to guarantee adequate revenues to cover expenditures. Taxation should also contribute to the redistribution of income or wealth. Should? Ha, ha, ha, ha, laughed Barry. Now you understand, he said, why every candidate for president in my country campaigns on pledges and promises.

The simplest way to make money is to join the club. When you are assigned the task of distributing the mountains of goods, nobody notices that your own pockets begin to bulge. When you steal a shirt from a store and are caught, you go to prison even if the thing was of little value. If you do it as a representative of your constituency, the 12 worst punishment meted out by the proper authorities is to bar your access to the trough of plenty. Nobody dares to call you thief. At worst you are then a man who made mistakes. The name of swindler is seldom tacked onto a person who misuses or misappropriates a million dollars. He is simply a gentleman in trouble.

Barry stressed that his needs were different from those of other individuals. Money sent to him by his parents was not enough to cover his expenditures. Trying to improve his finances, he applied his knowledge of taxation to his own life. I was not aware of it until the last evening before we all left for vacation, when he invited me to a pub for a glass of ale and acquainted me with the story I will try to summarize for you now.

Taxation is the most subtle form of power, he said, returning several pounds he had borrowed from me a few months ago. People can be divided into those who are taxed and those who do the taxing. He assured me that it was only as a close friend that I was privileged to get back what I had loaned him. That was not the case with other people.

For Barry dealing with taxation was a kind of training for a future career. Borrowing money was a complicated and delicate process. You shouldn't be in a hurry, he insisted, and you must properly evaluate the financial condition of your victim. You should also not forget to ask for discretion, otherwise, rumors and gossip might make life very unpleasant for you. When honor is at stake, the chance that you will be exposed to the public eye is almost zero.

Taxation should be applied to everyone you run into, regardless of race, color, or creed. That's what democracy is about. Methods that we use for borrowing, Barry went on, raising two fingers for another round of bitter, are not less important than the amount of money. If we are fishing from somebody who is rich, we should be twice as careful as when we borrow from a colleague. The best way is to borrow from him once or twice and then to give it back. When we repay our debts, we become trustworthy and thus avoid problems when the time arrives to do it again and on a larger scale.

Barry told me that his clock had already struck, because he was leaving the following afternoon and he was not intending to return to Europe in the near future. Tomorrow, precisely at five, he had invited all his creditors to the same pub in which we were enjoying our beer. He assured me that borrowing money is nothing but a form of taxation, and nobody is taxed more than he deserves and is capable of paying. That is the principle on which democracy was built, he stressed.
The next day, when I woke up, I realized that Barry was already on his way to America. Sheer curiosity did not permit me to miss the planned gathering at the pub. I was early and had consumed a pint of Guinness before noticing some familiar faces.

As I looked around an hour later, I recognized almost all the students of our faculty and a few professors. I ordered another beer, discretely watching the newcomers. Around five the pub was full. And new people were still crowding in.

Some looked around to see if Barry was trying to remain inconspicuous, but couldn't find him. On the way to the toilet I heard some shreds of conversations. No one mentioned Barry's name. It confirmed my conviction that our university was attended mostly, if not exclusively, by gentlemen.

At half past five it was so crowded that some of Barry's creditors were standing outside. I left the pub around seven in a pleasantly inebriated state, aware that Barry had reprehensibly staged the evening for me to make his point.

A lot of time passed before I again heard of Barry. He was a rising star on the horizon of American politics. A somebody, I was once respectful assured by two young fellow travelers on the train to Marseille. They explained that he was the first to understand and want to reform the system of taxation in the United States. He was promising to lower taxes decisively and to scrutinize public servants who squander the taxpayers' hard-earned money.

That was all I found about Barry among the yellowed papers. In the letter he had never sent my uncle cautioned my father against any future involvement of mine—though I was barely a toddler then—in politics and promised to send him the story of Barry.

Gathering all the pages I had scattered on the table I noticed something written on the back of one: "What appear to be virtues are often just a collection of personal interests put together by chance or our own ingenuity." I cannot tell you if that statement was related to the story of Barry or if it had been destined for my father.

After I had been at my task for several days, Monsieur C. returned from his voyage, and we spent another agreeable evening together.

At the end of supper, when cheese and grapes were served, told him about my discovery. Monsieur C. listened carefully and, after I had repeated the sentence written on the back of the page, said, "That's why your uncle would never have told you this story."

The next afternoon had to leave Chateau Bois-Renard to return to the capital. After a warm farewell I was taken to Auxerre. We drove down the same avenue planted with poplars and along the dusty country road to the railway station.

On the train to Paris I sat in a compartment with a man who seemed as much a stranger in France as I. We chatted about local cheeses and wines, then about gothic cathedrals and politics. When we reached our destination I helped him take down one of his heavy suitcases. He thanked me in a most civilised manner. I invited him for a drink the next day. He agreed and I was about to depart when started nervously patting his pockets. My companion looked at me questioningly. I stammered that I had probably left my money in my friend's chateau.

"Ah, your friend has a chateau?" he exclaimed.
"It is more complicated," I didn't elaborate.
My fellow traveller appeared most embarrassed by my plight.
"Will you accept my assistance?" he asked, offering to lend me some money.
"How kind of you, especially since I am not going home immediately because of a very important meeting. I will certainly need cash."
Here, I named a sum ten times larger than the one he had suggested.

He frowned slightly, but it was too late, as I had already seen that his wallet was full of banknotes. He handed me the bills, and asked where it would be convenient for us to meet the next day. We decided on a spot in the brasserie Epi d'Or, at rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and shook hands.

I left the station in a rather jolly mood.
Graphic/collage from “Monsters & Architecture” series by Helen Lovekin (Canada)
TWO TEXTS
from **JOSEPH CORNELL’S OPERAS**
by Norman Lock

**THE OPERA WITH CHOCOLATE-COVERED PEARLS**

Sigmund was there but only for a short time, he had to go, he said, to lecture on hysteria at the University of Vienna, so he left us abruptly, but we were not in the least put out, because Igor was there, he had come, at the last moment he had consented to listen to the opera which was not after all to his taste, we knew it, not at all his sort of thing, we had known it when we called to invite him, but graciously he came bringing with him a Russian ballerina for the collection and bringing with him also a box of chocolate-covered pears that he placed on a taboret, he nodded then as if to say you may proceed with the opera, which had no name, Joseph Cornell had fallen asleep before giving it one, but just as the orchestra was about to begin the overture, Groucho did an untoward thing, no it was Harpo who did it with his klaxon, and Igor, displeased, left for Martinique not long after Freud, in fact, had left although we were not suspicious, not in the least, choosing to believe there had been no complicity, that Igor was not going to meet Sigmund in Vienna or in Martinique or at the haberdashery in town to buy silk ties, in any event he, Igor, left with the chocolate-covered pears, alas, though the Russian ballerina remained behind to dazzle us with one half of a **pas de deux**.

**THE EIFFEL TOWER OPERA**

Now, Houdini! we shouted, sitting back in our seats to await his entrance onto the opera stage, but he did not come, he is indisposed, the impresario announced, because of his mother, who had shortly before passed on, Mr. Houdini has enrolled in the Institute for Psychical Research, he hopes to bend spoons solely with the power of his gaze, he hopes, the impresario continued, fiddling with his high silk hat, he hopes, I say, to establish communication with the dead, we were disappointed, the opera music went on a while unaccompanied, it behaved well under the circumstances, the musicians had put down their instruments in order to eat anchovy sandwiches, we closed our eyes and waited for something to happen, it was Alexandre Gustave Eiffel who relieved the terrible boredom, installing a tower of quite ingenious construction onstage, it is mental, he told us in confidence, an entirely mental creation, as such it requires little if any maintenance, we cheered, we threw him kisses so grateful were we to have this fabulous object to look at, we soon forgot all about Houdini who was at that moment in Paris, his fingertips resting lightly on an inverted wine glass as if waiting on the edge of a piano score to begin, to begin what? we whispered, fear chilling us, i was about to answer: death, when it became unnecessary, because the tower lit up suddenly and splendidly with thought and we were, what is the word? transfigured, one among us, however, cried out against the, quote, anarchistic and anachronistic, end quote, nature of Joseph Cornell's Operas, but we turned a deaf ear, toasting Mr. Cornell who sat reserved in his box, inscrutably listening to this, **The Eiffel Tower Opera.**
PART 3, CHAPTER 1

Cordell watches as the Lucky Duck picks up speed. He tucks his face into his shoulder as he is struck by a blast of sand washed up by the propellers. When it has subsided and he can see again the Duck is already far down the flat of the desert, pursued by a nebula of dust. Then she lifts off, leaving the restless sand behind her, and Cordell shields his eyes from the sun and watches her go. The de-3 banks to the left and for a moment he thinks he can see Tessa in the cockpit, taking a last look at his lone figure beside the mound of the grave, the only features in an enormous landscape of sand. He lifts his hand and the wings tip right, then left, then right. And then the Lucky Duck angles away to the south, receding, shrinking, its familiar shape compressing until it is no longer wings and fuselage and tail, blue nose and cartoon duck, twin fans ahead of engine cowlings, silver skin and rubber tires pulled in tight to the belly, but a silver dot, an early star, a premonition of the coming night. Her sound fades too, no longer a roar, no longer a buzz, just a distant hum, diminishing until he can no longer discern it from the churn of the wind across the desert or even the chorus of his thoughts and the flow of blood through his veins.

He watches until she disappears, until Tessa and her Gooney Bird are gone, absorbed into the pigment of the sky.

He stands for some time, unmoving, arms limp at his sides, a canvas bag dangling from his shoulder, staring across the flats to the first low, scrub-covered hills. The sun heats his back as it descends into the west. He is alone. Purely, absolutely, entirely alone. He gazes at his shadow, watches it elongate on the sand, the narrow breadth of his shoulders, the flapping of his vest. For a moment he is disoriented by the shadow’s excessive length, wonders if he really is so high, so tall, a beanpole—calf, at the coloured vest and his pants which reach mid-calf, at the sun as its chin grazes the hilltops, a massive orb of crimson, dimmed by haze to the point that he can stare at it unceremoniously with his passage. He is a moving stick on the landscape. His shadow continues to lengthen, ten metres, twenty, fifty. The light deepens, yellow, orange, red, and he turns again, walks backwards, watching the sun as its chin grazes the hilltops, a massive orb of crimson, dimmed by haze to the point that he can stare at it without discomfort.

Cordell walks backwards, watching until she disappears, until Tessa and her Gooney Bird are gone, absorbed into the pigment of the sky.

He turns once and walks backwards, inspecting the distance he has travelled. The mound which covers Erik’s body is a far hump of discoloured earth, receding. Cordell faces forward and marches on, leaving it to the impulses of anonymity, the wind that will sweep flat the upturned earth, the sun that will bleach it pale, blend it with a thousand hectares of desert.

His mind is as quiet as he can ever remember.

No murmurs beyond walls. No hum of television or radio, voices sentenced to perpetual chatter, filler with sparse splinters of information floating within. No chance of encountering someone he knows. He does not have to be prepared for forced cordiality. He is expected nowhere at no time.

He is free.

Not even books to vie for his attention. Which, strangely enough, is a relief. His race to consume every important piece of writing is postponed. Circumstances beyond his control. What a liberating phrase!

And witness to his passage, his bobbing stride across the sandy flats: the sky, the earth, the air, the wind.

He is alone.

The expected insights, reflections, revelations, enlightenment, self-knowledge, and wisdom do not immediately arrive, but he didn’t expect an instantaneous silencing of the cacophony of thought to reveal the lone hum of sanctity. It might take an hour or two.

He walks and thinks, images from his life fluttering through his mind: the bookstore, its legion of shelves packed tightly with volumes; his basement sanctuary, the bookstore in miniature, a distillation of the finest works of poetry and fiction he knows; the vast field behind his house, glowing in the afternoon sun, emitting the powerful incense of life; the boardwalk through the forest above the field, the almost-musical percussion of his shoes on the boards, boards which span the joists like the blocks on a xylophone, ringing with each step. He walks the desert, now crossing a low hill, now entering a shallow depression, the hard-packed sand thumping unceremoniously with his passage. He is a moving stick on the landscape. His shadow continues to lengthen, ten metres, twenty, fifty. The light deepens, yellow, orange, red, and he turns again, walks backwards, watching the sun as its chin grazes the hilltops, a massive orb of crimson, dimmed by haze to the point that he can stare at it without discomfort.

The first moment of peace hits him so suddenly and with such force that he stops dead. Naturally, thoughts about the invocation of that state flood in, immediately erasing it, and his mind is astir with noise and internal dialogue about the silence.

—Wow, he says aloud, his voice immediately consumed by the desert. —Wow. He gazes intently into the sun, trying to lure that state out of its fiery heart, but the harder he tries, the more he concentrates, the more his thoughts become obscured by turbinage of noise, flashfields of image, barrages of words.

He hears a distant hum, an engine, and he quickly surveys the sky, wondering, perhaps hoping, that it is the twin Pratt & Whitneys of the Lucky Duck. But the sky is empty. This noise is coming from the desert. Then he sees beneath the sinking sphere of the sun a stir of dust. The noise increases. He stands uncertainly, wondering if he is ready to encounter the Rajasthanis, to attempt to communicate. He did not expect to meet so soon, was hoping for a few days of peace and solitude. There is nowhere to hide.

The vehicle approaches slowly, its headlights like a pair of eyes searching him out. Then he notices that it is accompanied by a caravan of camels. They are heading right for him. He stands frozen, hoping perhaps to be mistaken for a tree or a fence post. Their trajectory will bypass him, but then it seems that he has been spotted, for the headlights swerve until they are bearing down. The...
vehicle, which carries a loaded roof rack and appears to be some kind of Range Rover, stops twenty metres away, the camels drawing up slowly behind it. The truck’s passenger door opens, a man with a large camera gets out, snaps a photograph. The camels continue on past the vehicle, gangly legs scissoring in and out, until they are around him, six in all. Three are mounted by men in colourful turbans who look not at Cordell, but at the photographer. Atop each of the other three camels is a stunningly gorgeous woman. Two are white, the other is Asian. The three men dismount their camels and immediately rush to help the women to the ground. They are dressed in western clothing, fancy skirts and tops, Gucci sunglasses. One of them approaches Cordell and wraps her arm around his shoulders.

Hello, she says, and kisses him on the cheek. The photographer snaps a picture. Then she turns to the camera and smiles, kicking one leg up and leaning on him, and another picture is taken. The Asian woman now rests on his other shoulder and adopts the same pose. Picture. Then they each kiss his cheeks. Picture.

Several other people are emerging from the Rover, kits and boxes in hand, approaching the women with brushes and lipsticks. The photographer is a short, stocky man in khakis, his thinning hair a tussle. He steps up to Cordell, and his hand extended. Cordell shakes it.

I’m Ashley Duffy, he says in an unrefined British accent. Vogue magazine. We’re doing a shoot. You don’t mind, do you? Petra, can you get a release? he yells over his shoulder. We want to catch the last of this light, so let’s do this quick. A woman with a buzzcut and big sunglasses approaches with a piece of paper. Standard terms, Petra says. Sign here. Cordell does so without reading the form. Ashley looks at it. Thank you, Mr. Kafka.

Franz, Cordell says. That’s quite an outfit, one of the models says. She has unnaturally straight hair and lips like little balloons.

Jenna, this is Franz, the photographer says. Where are you from? Germany? she asks in her southern American drawl.

Canada.

She fingers his vest. I’m telling you, Ashley. Canada’s the next big fashion empire.

Okay then, no dawdling. We’ve only got a few minutes of this gorgeous light.

Ashley uses that few minutes to shoot a hundred photos. Support staff hum around the models, touching up, preening, removing these earrings, adding this necklace. Cordell is in a few of the photographs, usually with a model slung over his arm, at others he sits at their feet, or stands in the background looking away. He accepts manipulation like a mannequin, letting them mould him to each pose, passive, compliant. For one series of photos Rainbow, the other white model, is pressed against him, her large breasts crushed against his lower back as she embraces him with uncomfortable force. For the final photos he, Rainbow, and Kary, the Asian model, sit atop a camel, Cordell sandwiched between the two women, his arms around Kary’s almost non-existent waist while Rainbow presses against him from behind. Click click click as Ashley bellows orders to them, Rainbow, kiss the back of Franz’s neck, Franz, could you put your hands on Kary’s breasts, just for this one? Try to smile, will you please? Okay, this one’s serious, let’s have frowns, your mum’s just kicked it, so frown frown frown!

Cordell’s thoughts drift away from the assault of exaggerated femininity to the poor camel, who complains vociferously during the entire process, shuddering under their weight. The three turbaned men are not pleased about the situation, but they do not complain. Cordell looks one of them in the eye and shakes his head, frowning. The man scowls and Cordell looks away, his chin grazing Kary’s shoulder, the alchemy of her perfume combining with the reek of sweating, pissed off camel, inventing a repulsive effluvium. Click click click, and then the sun is gone. The camel kneels and they dismount.

Cordell stands apart from the next flurry of activity. Tents are erected, a fire is built, pots are set to boil. Coolers emerge from the Rover, are cracked open to reveal exotic cuisine in boiler bags: frozen lobster, mussels, asparagus, mushrooms. Sacks of Caesar salad. Sushi rolls. Bottles of champagne. The three men labour intensively to construct the site and prepare the food while the crew and models lean against the Rover, circulating a joint. Ashley smokes a gigantic cigar, his arm around Kary’s waist. They laugh excessively at each other’s jokes, discuss Galliano, Fendi, Chanel, Neiman Marcus as common nouns.

Cordell offers to help by reaching for a side of a tent’s frame, but one of the Rajasthani’s pushes him away with firm but polite assertion.

Thank-thank, the man says, and Cordell nods and moves away, squatting on his hams, observing from a distance. The temperature is falling and the crew and models cluster around the fire within the circle of tents, while the Rajasthani men build their own fire a dozen metres away and sit, smoking thin pipes and chatting quietly. The unsaddled camels have been hobbled and they limp about the perimeter, grazing on the little shrubs that jut from the hard ground.

Cordell sits cross-legged now on the sand, looking from one group to the other, feeling implicated in some Western conspiracy of luxury in which he is not allowed to participate. He is hungry and thirsty but is wary of the limited supplies on his back. He is also vaguely determined to last for a few days, to clear his mind. He is cold.

He looks down at the sand before his knees which is glowing faintly in the light of the rising moon.

You can join us, a woman’s voice says, and he looks up. It is Rainbow, she is wrapped in a blanket, gazing down at him, holding out a plastic champagne cup.

Yes, he replies without commitment.

Yes, well, come then. She reaches down with her other hand and helps him to his feet.

He sits on a blanket and accepts a paper plate with chunks of sushi, lobster, and a few sprigs of asparagus. Rainbow eats well, but the other models do little more than smoke and sulk. Cordell sips from a plastic cup the best champagne he has ever tasted.

Ashley dominates the conversation and everything is about fashion and movie stars, with endless name-dropping and back-biting, imitations, derision, mountains of profanity, people, groups, styles insulted and then immediately praised. Cordell sits cross-legged, his spine straight, and absorbs it all without comment or reaction. It’s like watching television, uninvolved, distant, lulling. Rainbow pulls part of the blanket over her and leans against him.

You’re name isn’t really Franz Kafka, is it, she whispers.

Cordell says nothing, looks down into her aquamarine eyes and then at the fire…
The Vulture
by Stan Rogal

NOTE: This play utilizes a fragment written by Franz Kafka also entitled 'The Vulture'. It is not, however, an adaptation of that fragment.

CHARACTERS: 'A' & 'B'

SCENE: Two people sit at a kitchen table. 'B' sits downstage facing three-quarters to the audience. 'B' is reading a large, hard-cover book throughout most of the action. The book is almost finished. 'A' sits upstage facing the audience. 'A' looks in pain, rubbing his forehead and eyes; making awful faces. As lights rise, there is a long pause before 'A' speaks. He struggles with his words.

A: I was thinking of something.
B: (Head in book.) What?
A: I don't know. I can't remember. Something.
B: Something?
A: Yes.
B: Oh.
A: (Pause.) It was an idea. An idea about something.
B: About what?
A: I don't know.
B: Think.
A: I am thinking.
B: Think harder.
A: I'm thinking as hard as I can. (Rubbing eyes, making faces.) My head, my eyes Hurt I'm thinking so hard.
B: Well?
A: It's no use. I can't remember.
B: Then, forget it.
A: I can't forget it. It won't let me. It's sitting on the edge of my eyeballs; flashing on my eyelids, flashing on my eyelids, like a specter.
B: What does it look like?
A: It's hazy. And the shape changes. It pulses.
B: That's the blood rushing to your eyes.
A: No. It's something. Something important.
B: If it was important, you'd remember.
A: Not necessarily.
B: You'd remember, believe me.
A: Not necessarily.
B: You would.
A: Not necessarily.
B: It only makes sense.
A: Not necessarily.
B: That's what they say.
A: NOT NECESSARILY!
B: Have it your way, but...
A: All right. All right. For the sake of argument, I'll call him 'Man A', OK?
B: 'Man A'? OK. That's better. Not very original, but it's a start. A beginning. I'm painting a picture.
A: Good. So, he's lying on the ground, and, at his feet, is a large bird.
B: What kind of bird?
A: A vulture?
B: (Shrugs.) I have it your way.
A: I remember things all the time that are un-important.
A: Fifteen feet from a hydrant. Ten cents to the dime. The first step begins the longest journey. Eight out of ten doctors recommend. Phi-K-squared. Three strokes and you're out. And names. I remember names like nobody's business. People I knew and left. People who left me. Bosses. Bosses and their families. Bosses and their families and their pets. Polly. Rover. Duke. Daisy. Muffy. Names on billboards. Names on windows. People I've never met but only heard or read about. Marilyn Monroe. John F. Kennedy. Martin Luther King. John Lennon. Cleopatra. Vincent Van Gogh -- 'Starry, Starry Night.' They're all right there in plain view. What is it? I can't get rid of them. I hardly open my mouth and they leap out like trained circus tigers through hoops. They look impressive, but it's all an act. Later, they go running back to their cages to feed on dead meat. But, the important things! It's the important things that slip my mind; that get muscled to the back of my brain to an area that's off-limits or atrophied. They get trapped back there and it takes a bulldozer or an earthquake to wrench them free. (Smacks forehead.) God damn!
B: (Without looking up.) You're going to hurt yourself.
A: It has something to do with a story I read.

B: What?
A: The idea.
B: Ah!
A: About a man lying on the side of the road.
B: Doing what?
A: Nothing. Just lying there.
B: Yes. But he must have been doing something.
A: No. That's all.
B: Just lying there?
A: Yes.
B: Well, how did he get there?
A: I don't know. The story never said. I don't think it's important how he got there; just that he's there.
B: Pretty uninteresting story if you ask me. Doesn't explain how or why. Does it tell you who he is?
A: No.
B: It figures.
A: (Feeling more pain.) Uhhhh... Those questions aren't important to the story.
B: That's where you're wrong. Unless the character has a name, a place and an activity, how is the reader to identify with him? The reader must be told everything. The more one knows about the character, the more one is able to empathize and share in the character's plight. That's what makes a story alive, real and interesting -- details and facts. I'm not surprised you have difficulty remembering the story.
A: I don't have any difficulty remembering the story. It's the idea that's the problem.
B: What idea?
A: Owww... My head! I don't know. That's what I'm trying to tell you. I told you behind the story. Don't you see? It's not about characters but ideas!
B: If you knew characters, you'd know the ideas, believe me.
A: Not necessarily.
B: If you knew the characters, you would.
A: Not necessarily.
B: You would.
A: Not necessarily.
B: It only makes sense.
A: Not necessarily.
B: That's what they say.
A: NOT NECESSARILY!
B: Have it your way, but...
A: All right. All right. For the sake of argument, I'll call him 'Man A', OK?
B: 'Man A'? OK. That's better. Not very original, but it's a start. A beginning. I'm painting a picture.
A: Good. So, he's lying on the ground, and, at his feet, is a large bird.
B: What kind of bird?
B: You must remember. You can't leave me with the anonymous figure of a large bird. You have to name it. It isn't real unless it's named. Think. (A' is in great pain now.) Eagle? Heron? Osprey? Emu? (A' shaking head at each wrong guess, even as pain increases.)
A: (Screams.) VULTURE! ( Falls off chair to floor downstage in front of table.)
B: What?
A: (Quieter.) It was a vulture.
B: A vulture? Fine. A vulture. ( Plays with the word a bit.)
A: Vul-ture. Yes. What was it doing?
B: What was it doing?
A: My eyes ache.
B: Yes, but what was the vulture doing?
A: The vulture... was... chewing...
A: Chewing... on the man's... feet.
B: 'Man A'?
A: Yes.
B: Who?
A: He wasn't dead.
B: But, that's absurd. Vultures only eat dead flesh.
A: Yes, I know. But, that's what the vulture was doing. (Crawls on all fours toward the audience in obvious pain.)
B: Oh, right. Suspension of disbelief. Why was he doing it?

Rampike 13/1

by Stan Rogal

HARACTERS

OTE

28
A: I don’t know.
B: You don’t know. Figures. (Piqued, so changes tack.) Was the man trying to stop it?
A: Not now.
B: Why not now?
A: He tried earlier. The vulture was too strong. The man had a choice -- his eyes or his feet.
B: Yes. So, he offered his feet?
A: I guess. My eyes hurt. They’re strained.
B: (Getting into it a bit.) Was the man hurt or wounded?
A: No. Yes. His feet. My eyes are aching.
B: If he wasn’t hurt or wounded, why didn’t simply leave rather than give his feet to the vulture?
A: I don’t know. I can’t see. My eyes are strained from trying to see and not seeing.
B: (Begins to look over his book at ‘A’ once in awhile.) If you ask me, it’s just the opposite.
A: What?
B: Your eyes are strained from trying to see too much; from trying to see what isn’t really there in the first place. You’re trying to make something out of nothing; trying to make sense out of something that is incomplete and non-sensical.
A: Oww. Perhaps you’re right. Maybe that’s it. But, the pain... what can I do about the pain?
B: Try squinting.
A: What?
B: Squinting. Squint. You’ll see less.
A: But, if telling you -- the pain doesn’t come from what I see. It comes from what I don’t see.
B: Ridiculous. You can’t see what isn’t there and what isn’t there can’t hurt you. Squint. (‘A’ squints at audience.) Well?
A: Everything’s fuzzy. Nothing’s clear.
B: What about the pain?
A: (Considers a second.) I... I think it’s lessening. It is. It’s going away. (Crawls around floor.)
B: What did I tell you? You see? You’re functioning very well now and suffering no pain. Oh, you might bump into a wall or two at first. That’s to be expected. If won’t last. Soon, you’ll be moving about like your old self. You won’t even notice the things you miss. It will be like you never expected them. (‘A’ crawls around ‘B’ and between the table, gropping.) That’s the problem with the world today -- entirely too much sensation; the mind can’t handle it all; can’t sort the data quickly enough. It’s obvious that your eyes were on overload. You were trying to take in too much; push beyond reasonable limits. Let that be a lesson to you. It’s a known fact that too much light is bad for the eyes. Invest in blinders. Better to remain in semi-darkness. Better yet, wear gloves and ear muffs. Plug your nose. Keep your mouth shut. Feet and ankles.
B: The par... the hero... no, the heroine... no, the... I don’t remember. Squint. Keep squinting.
A: (Squints vigorously.) It’s no use. The pain’s back.
B: Worse. (Shakes and tears at ‘B’s feet and cuffs.) How can you not know what you’re reading? How can you keep reading what bores you?
B: (Squinting in fear.) I don’t need to know. I don’t read to know something. I read to pass the time. Any pleasure I derive is from reading itself -- pure and simple. It makes things easier. When I pick up a book down, I have nothing to remember and nothing to forget. It kills time, that’s all.
A: Kills time? That’s all? (Begins chewing on ‘B’s feet and ankles.)
B: Yes! And why not? What’s you’re reading done for you except fill you with crazy ideas you can’t understand and driven you mad?
A: (Quotes while crawling up ‘B’s legs to standing position.) “A book must be the axe for the frozen sea within us.”
B: Remains seated though untouched by ‘A’. Chuckles.
A: From another book, yes.
B: Another useless piece of information! Another bit of cheap tin from the metaphoric scrap heap! (“A” raises his hands above his head, hooks his fingers like talons. ‘B’ pleads.) Squint? Please squint? (Pause.) Tell me about your story. You never finished your story.
B: A second man?
A: Yes. ‘Man B’.
B: Yes, ‘Man B’?
A: And ‘Man B’ asks ‘Man A’ why he allows the vulture to treat him so badly.
B: Yes.
A: ‘Man A’ says he had no choice. The vulture was too strong. It was his face or his feet. He preferred to sacrifice his feet.
B: (Squinting madly.) Yes. I remember. Of course. I see it all clearly now.
A: ‘Man B’ laughs heartily and says, ‘Why sacrifice either? One shot and it’s all over for the vulture.’
B: Yes. Wonderful. Please.
A: But, he doesn’t have his gun. (Arms swaying now. Flapping slightly.)
B: Oh.
A: ‘Can you wait half an hour while I get it?’ asks ‘Man B’.
B: Half an hour?
A: ‘I don’t know,’ says ‘Man A’. ‘I’ll try.’
B: Yes. Try.
A: (Begins to lean back and appears to grow. Eyes widen.)
B: No?
A: No siree. When he heard the word ‘gun’, his eyebrows sort of raised and he made up his mind to act.
B: Yes?
A: He stretched out his wings, leaned way back to gain impetus, and...
B: And?
A: (Loudly.) AND LIKE A JAVELIN, THRUST HIS BEAK DEEP INTO THE MAN’S THROAT. (‘A’ drives forward. Men scream as though drowning in blood. BLACKOUT, then red spot and BLACKOUT.)
TWO POEMS
from Fluttertongue: Book 3: Disarray
by Steven Ross Smith

97.

i stand in displacement. i have many tools to hook me in. i
am bewildered. my left foot moves forward. my eyes gazing
right through the space i walk. i am hooked to the globe, i am yanked
from my particular gravel and grass, i have not learned to love my
hereness. the trees are on fire. the water is rising. i love machines,
their sur-human power, yes my feet are here in this flat place,
where the ground breaks. my head is detached drifting in
a(better)nother place, i am a schism, a schist, a schistophrenic. i
require medication, mediation, divorced as i am. i say yank me,
yank me! thinking i'm a doodle-dandy. sucking digital candy.
thinking i'm a bard and a barterer, oblivious to the barb-bite. the
sun is bright, i'm feeling better, but for the vague sting in a numb
absconding with tranquility, embouchure. the music offlame. with frightful
part of my flesh, i can dull things by ogling, collecting. let's
gather, lets tantra, let's labyrinth, repeat Pentium, Coca-Cola,
Hyundai, Dow. Pentium, Coca-Cola, Hyundai, Dow. we can go
anywhere anytime, so good to get away. i'm off. but what is this
jab, this jerk that keeps twisting my skull, no matter, i can doff
my head flip it to the hook. my feet may stumble, but my body's
still dancing. where it used to be.
February. the month of saints and chivalry. heart-takers, bowers and quiverers. and the quizzical dada inventor incanting on the stage. month of tenderness and shivery cold. depends where you live. on your altitude. in chill some fall into age-gloom, the parchment crimp of death. it is the month of under the bridges of Paris, in Dada Zurich back eighty-four years. of Cabaret Voltaire where the magic bishop of clouds and elephants appeared with a be-attitude of reverent irreverence, month of crossbills and cupids at your feeder. of thinking through lips, murmur of romance welling offshore, an el niño of fetish drafting eastward from the sea to market love. and Ball rolls on onstage, chants himself into glossolalia, into terror, 'til he's carried off in his cylinder in a self-hour. such is expected, unexpected. the frozen ground welcomes no one, loss is ordained sweat, babbling of cats and peacocks, sea horses and flying fish, the lamb of god. from dada to deus with no thought of chocolates and greeting cards. heart-red, crest on the crowns of redpolls beaking your seeds, finches flashing flame-orange. the month of welcomed colour. it is no month to die. frozen ground welcomes no one. a strawbale set fire meets frosty resistance, eventually tenders the soil, a hole can be scraped. but who wants to rest there, given a choice. Ball bolts, in a flight out of time. a soaring fish, he isn't built for airy distances, but reaches Swiss peaks in the spring nonetheless. Emmy picks meadow-lush wildflowers as birds magic-carpet the skies overhead, she sets poppies and edelweiss in a vase in their shadowy room. he intones. she opens the shutters to scurrying moths and spiders, the spilling vermilion music of the sun. they rise, sing hallelujah, inventing the sounds in their mouths.

Notes to references in pieces in book 3: disarray:
♦Hugo Ball: Dadaist, organizer & performer at the Cabaret Voltaire, 1916, Zurich.
♦Emmy Hennings: Dada artist/performer and wife of Ball.
Graphic image “The backbone of the story” based on a Scintigram of the nervous system (detail featuring head and shoulders) by Brian Cullen (Canada)
EXCERPT: Amen! OFF THEORY
from The Book of Neoism -- 5th Volume
Puppet Government/Lower Level
by Istvan Kantor (a.k.a. Monty Cantsin)

NEOISM?! has gathered a motley crew of subversives, criminals and perverts, vicious conspirators chained to one another like filthy beasts.

They live in Akademgorod, land of vertical reality symbolized by the sixoclock anew, somewhere in Totalitaria, where flaming-flying steam irons light the sky.

Wonder and anxiety weighed heavy on the chest of the conspirators, and it was NEOISM?!, that ancient thirst for subversive knowledge that had scorpioned itself in their bellies, in their lunges for such a long time. But it had been transformed, mixed up, contaminated with confusion. They felt that soon they could quench their thirst forever. A tickling and vaporous coolness rained down from the trees. Transparencies of rubber cement and perfumed fake blood dripped down.

NEOISM?! is uncessing thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst, thirst.

The ever-stranger rumbling of NEOISM?! was coming in gusts and it forewarned of the cavernous depths of endless underground vaults. The gluttonous abyss of NEOISM?! had swallowed its own convulsing tunnel like body.

NEOISM?! is the great thirst for spicy rituals and bloody madness. NEOISM?! is the merciless thirst that penetrates the flesh and anoints it with pain. The thirst for NEOISM?!, stronger than any thirst.

All power to the machine! All power to the machine! All power to the machine! All power to the machine! All power to the machine! All power to the machine! All power to the machine! All power to the machine! All power to the machine! All power to the machine!

Broken clocks and flaming irons, evaporation extravaganza strikes pimples of media volcanoes. Blasts from the information machinery. File cabinet sledgehammers pounding the system of communication. The spectacle of noise. Ray-needles sucking out the bright blood of sex workers.

Red signals rebounded, in that smoky subterranean immensity, like the flushed, convulsive, gluttonous, apoplectic faces of NEOISM?!.
Michael Winkler—Spelled-Forms
(abstract visual-forms created from the spelling-sequences of written words)

The abstract forms in my work are made from the spelling of words. The 26 letters of the Roman Alphabet are treated as a circular arrangement of 26 points (each point or dot is the location of a specific letter). I simply connect-the-dots to spell-out words and produce the Spelled-Forms.

BENT, CURLED, AND AXIAL LINES RESEMBLE...

The spacing of the letter-points around the circle is more complex than it might appear. You'll notice that "E", not "A", is the topmost point; and the letter-points around the top of the circle are spaced farther apart than those around the bottom—1 originally wanted to arrange the Alphabet into the simplest possible, circular letter-pattern; but my intuition told me to organize the consonants around a symphony of vowels, which resulted in the unusual spacing. To balance the overall design of the pattern, I rotated it so that "E", rather than "A", is at the top.

Within my circle of 26 letter-points, there are 325 possible connecting-lines, which in combination can produce millions of different visual formations.

Except for establishing the process, I have no control over how the spelled-forms look—the design of the circle of letter-points never changes; and the spelling-sequence of each word, determines how the letter-points are to be connected. Every spelled-form is made using exactly the same process, whether it's expressed in a drawing, painting, or installation. I've used the same process to produce visualizations of thousands of words in a dozen Romanized Languages.

I think it's important to mention that in 1980; when I discovered how to use spelling to generate abstract forms, I wasn't a visual artist. I was an electronic music composer. I was exploring ideas for a text-sound piece which would involve the use of geometric patterns to create nonsense words. I had developed the circle of letter-points, and was experimenting with some regular shapes based on a simple, axial design. I noticed I was getting bits and pieces of words like "A-L" and "A-X-I", so I decided to spell the word "A-X-I-A-L"—its spelled-form was amazing! Then, out of curiosity, I drew lines to the letter-points to
produce the *spelled-forms* of "S-H-A-P-E-S", "U-N-S-H-A-P-E-D", "R-E-G-U-L-A-R", "I-R-E-G-U-L-A-R", "S-T-R-U-C-T-U-R-E-S", and "U-N-S-T-R-U-C-T-U-R-E-D". From then on, I was obsessed with the process. A few days later, I was drawing out new words while sitting at the front-desk of *and/or* (a contemporary art center located in Seattle), where I ran the Public Access Electronic Music Studio. The Curator of another art center was standing behind me. She asked about the "diagrammatic forms". I showed her how they were made, and she offered me a solo exhibition. Since I had no significant training in the visual arts, I relied on artist-friends, and the visual arts staff at *and/or*, to teach me enough to produce that first exhibition. The point is that I never had any plans to become a visual artist; it just happened as a result of my discovery of the process, and the desire to share what I found. Over the past 20 years, I've constantly experimented with the techniques and materials of various mediums, but nothing in the process has changed—it's still the same circle of letter-points, I just connect-the-dots to spell the words, and reveal the forms.

Why have I devoted myself to this simple process for so long, when my life's goal was to compose music? Many people, even some of my strongest supporters, have tried their best to convince me that any meaningful forms are just a coincidence. However, for me, the *spelled-forms* reveal secret patterns unknowingly employed by us, as we have developed and perpetuated our languages. As such, the goal of my work is not simply to follow the process; the resulting visualizations have a kind of spiritual meaning. I see my work as a tribute to how the elegant proportions of Nature are unknowingly reflected in the patterns of our own choices. It's not so surprising to me, that we unknowingly base our own creations on the same principles of design that define our physical Being, We may see ourselves as disconnected from Nature, but there's no denying that Nature's biochemical patterns determine the essential characteristics of our personalities, and design the very means of our Awareness. When I look at my visualizations of words, I feel as if I'm looking at the skeleton of living language—they're newly discovered constellations of pure form; yet, they recall the mysteries of ancient geometries left on cave walls, or scratched on stones. They make me wonder, and give me the sense that somehow everything is tied together by a single thread.
Drunk Driving
by Evelyn Lau

We were driving the wrong way
down a one-way street
when the police car cruised past,
swerved sharply round.
The policeman gave an angry shout
and the night became a circus
of swimming lights and sirens,
blue-red, disco-bright.
You got out of the car, stood small
and calm in his brute vision,
lies like tiny bells tinkling
from your throat.
The sight of your smooth thighs
in their short-shorts stopped him
so that I heard his halting breath,
and knew that if beauty
is believed to equate goodness,
as the studies show, then
he would let you go.
So we drove away drunk
to another bar, we who as girls
had lain in pink beds, reading
GONE WITH THE WIND and torn Harlequins,
picturing ourselves princesses
who would grow up to live in castles
with princes who rode white horses
and never left.
When I closed my eyes the world
was dark and drained, and turned
slowly in a lightless merry-go-round.
That night I dreamt I was at the doctor's,
he and I separated by a row of mirrors
each reflecting us back to ourselves,
and though I tried to shout my misery
it merely bounced back to me
from my own reflection –
my words flew round the room like birds
and broke against the walls.
Outside the closed windows
beautiful blondes in bikinis
played volleyball, surfed and swam
under a faraway California sun.
Graphic image “E” by Christian Burgaud (France)
**Dark Drink**  
by Jason Camlot

> Let's see that bottle. Whew!  
> That makes my eyes ache.  
> —Ernest Hemingway

I dropped a bottle in the dark  
and lost it there for many years  

of daylight. From the dregs and up  
through the hollow neck a spare man- 

hood grew, straight and transparent,  
like the sparse prose  

of a repressed war,  
a straw from which to sip another self;  
tight like the mouth of a narrow mouth jar.  

Many years later, again in the dark,  
I embraced the straw with my lips.  

I took a deep drink of Ernest  
Hemingway. How embarrassing  

for a man, in this day and age,  
The sun set, and there, in the dark  

I found myself, one big Papa,  
in full banana republic  
regalia, drinking myself  
into a stupor of sadness  

without love or progeny, but  
great sources of companionship  

for speech and oblivion  
at whatever dark watering hole.  

*  
We were all there together, each  
his own significant virtue.  

Mike was a bad drunk. Brett was a good drunk.  
Bill was a good drunk. I was unpleasant  

after I passed a certain point. Our words  
were of drink in the dark. The dark  

was where we found ourselves, repeatedly,  
in others throats. We reported  
whether we remembered who we  
were. Whether we were pleased or numb  

with what we remembered or could  
not remember. Or whether we cared, or not.  

*  
I became a drunkard, afraid,  
reticent, dangerous. Nothing  

was ever out in the open,  
off-hand comments coursed deadly alive.  

The jagged necks of our broken  
bottles were slides in and out  
of our murky dreams. We spoke with hate.  
We spoke with indifference to hate.  

I had been schooled in this, and drew  
upon my lessons: My first drink,  
a can of beer in a basement  
with grade-school friends. My second  
drink, bourbon and milk in my parents'  
house, after they had gone to sleep.  

Company leads to solitude, and then  
back to company. We need each other  
in drink to confirm that a person  
has survived this much whisky,  
and not only survived,  
but survived to have another.  

*  
Sometimes Brett needed to destroy  
herself before my eyes. I loved  
her and was willing to oblige her.  
We were neglectful of ourselves,  
and frail. Cast off and set adrift  
from the drunk continent. Immersed  
in the cold, refreshing dark. I'd  
stumble away from a tête-à-tête  
with Brett, scattering loose  
change like teeth on taqueria.  

floors. I wandered, the first sober  
pilgrim at dawn, but drunk at night.  

CINZANO on the sidewalk  
in dark letters.  

*  
What other nights forgotten?  
What other such nights escaped
by slipping inside an establishment,
with all the consoling paraphernalia,
cold and translucent: glass, ice, liquor.
The clinks, and the barely-heard clinks,
chipped chimes resounding
in a failing neon dimness.
These places, with heavy doors,
stools and plastic swizzle sticks,
ascending bubbles and slices
of thick-skinned fruit all laid out,
are gleaming holes for us to crawl into.
The storage cells for our most
necessary amnesia, where you can swallow
Maraschino cherries until you are no longer.

When you are stained all red inside,
then you are ready to explain your story
to the fellow next to you who has been
indulging in the olives.

* 
Sometimes there was companionship,
the shared bewilderment of men
alone together. We sat respecting
solitude, never venturing
near each other's spots of weakness.
We lied to each other about
our lives and habits. One drink a day with
my mother at tea. We encouraged
each other. Drink up. We feigned
concern and generosity. Are those poisonous
things paid for? Sometimes three
or four confessions at once,

criss-crossing, never touching. I enjoyed
the presence of men larger than myself
drinking themselves silent, lifting
glasses, tending their faces with
awkward hands. We stared through each other for
hours and hours. It was good to be alone
in this company. It was good to depart
alone from this company.

And once, when I was the last man
sitting, I drank a bottle of
wine for company. It was pleasant to
be drinking slowly and to be tasting
the wine and to be drinking alone.
A bottle of wine was good company.
It looked like hair-oil and smelled like
Italian strega. I sat across from
the swinging doors of the saloon.
A very saturated man
entered, and I watched him flap heavily
like a soaked rag. He was known simply as
The Bottle. The Bottle entered.
He was more like the rag inside
a bottle, the wet wick of a Roman
candle. He drank only wine, so I called
him Wine Bottle. His white jacket
was purple under the arms. The steam of
wine hissed from his mouth. He must
drink a lot of wine, I thought to myself.
I spoke my thoughts aloud, and he heard me.
"Take me to your wine," he said. I walked up
the road and got out the two bottles of
wine. They were cold. Wine Bottle followed me.

Some things--lost for so long in myself--were
surfacing, my shame-charm necklace
gathered thickly in my throat. You
have to drink plenty of wine to get it
all down again, Wine Bottle observed. He
took one bottle and I took the other
bottle. The wine was icy cold
and tasted faintly rusty. That's not such
filthy wine, Wine Bottle said. No, it was
not such filthy wine, and I could
breathe again. Under the wine I
lost the disgusted feeling.

* 
I'm trying to remember
where I left my cigarettes:
The Salty Dog, The Cavern, Moe's, Christopher's, Bernadette's, The Mad Hatter, The Kilowatt, The Elephant and Crown, Le Saint-Sulpice, Baker Street, Biddle's, The Saggy Sow, La Cabane, Chicago's Stanley Pub, The Peel Pub, Les Bobards, Le Beaujolais, The John Bull Pub, The Rub, Café Sarajevo, Cheers!, Sherlock's, The Albion, Jello Bar, The Medley, Jimbo's, Champs, Chameleon, Les Beaux Esprits, Brewtopia, J.R.'s, Bistro Duluth, Winnie's, Dalva's, Woody's, Shayne's The Lime Light, L'Barouf, VV (Vereinigte Völker) Taverna, Whiskey Café, The Gold Spike, Old Pro, Casanova's, Verres Steralisés, Sofa Bar, Le Swimming, The Stork Club, Ramada Inn, O'Greenberg's (Irish Yiddish Coffee), Pip's, The Rusty Fin, Thursdays, Bar Italia, Silver City, The Typhoon, La Maisonée, O'Looney's, Clooney's, Reggie's, The Saloon, Mad Dog in The Fog, La Cage, The Limelight, Station 10, Le Steppe, Club Soda, Cola Note, Le Spectrum, The End. We went out to the café to have an apéritif and watch the evening crowd on the Boulevard. They seemed so sober, so lost in themselves, as Brett and I prepared not to judge each other. "What will you drink?" "Pernod." "That's not good for little girls." "Dites garçon, un pernod." "A pernod for me too." We let the drinks in. A faint green light outlined the shape of Brett's face. It was how I looked as a boy. "What's the matter, you sick?" "Yes." "You oughtn't to drink pernod if you're sick." "You neither." I never accused her of anything again. What's the use of accusing yourself before you were a man. Before you understood how a bottle can bring you back to your head. * Drunk and stupid at Pennyland Arcades, we are a gang again. A neat set. A clean body. Plugging coins into the voice-o-matic, performing our little skits of love. Mikey taunts me with a microphone. "Speak into the Mikey-phone!" Dr. Bill develops his philosophy of syrups and the sexes. Brett burlesques her mother frying "whiskey tarts." "Frapracks!" We play our bottles like glass flutes and charm our snake. The snake bites himself and dies. In unison, "One hundred puddles of spew in the stall..." Bottles detonate. Shiny brown shards of glass crunching beneath us. Mikey doing his old soft shoe, with calliope and the bells of pinball. That lost afternoon still somewhere on cardboard Voice-O-Graph discs, our forgotten
coasters with the breath of alcoholics preserved upon them.

*  
Another night alone, I emptied one, then another.

And then another. The contents of each were lost forever. I ordered more and emptied them in turn. *The old woman looked in once and counted the empty bottles.* I was glad that someone was keeping track.

This way it would be known if I ever went missing. I slipped an empty one into my coat pocket and moved onto the streets.

I leaned against a wall. I slipped into an alley where the light from the street could not find me. I felt a shatter deep inside.

*  
It all ended, one of my nights of ellipses. *The walls of The Stork Club modestly dressed in gold tinsel skirts.* Each alcoholic his assignment to keep him in the black, in the drink. To keep the dark alive.

Dr. Bill retrieved bags of ice from the freezer. Mike spun the mirror ball to keep his glass full. Brett showed her mole upon the bartender's request. "You're drunk," some nosy motherfucker said. "Perhaps I am drunk," I replied with a bottle in that cock-sucker, punk-ass motherfucker's eye. Then barkeep made me blotto, and I fell further down the long, dark neck of the empty bottle...

beyond the realm of drink...further into the dark...and I believe I heard someone singing..."bury the bottle with me...." In the ground and in the night, I dropped my bottle...lost it there for many years.

From soil, from dregs and straight up through the hollow neck, a spare

From soil, from dregs and straight up through the hollow neck, a spare manhood...clean and transparent, the sparse prose of a repressed war.

---

Graphic/image “Zero” by Donato Mancini (Canada)
PLIOCENE TRICKS VI
by Katerina Fretwell

A THEORY
In a time-warp's blink,
wise Mama & Papa
twig to the one true dowel
that fits everyone:
talking tongue
    into groove
tenderly
envisions the whole
(hole spelled with a W
a double You Two).

Hole's gone holistic –
    not just sex
roles cut & dried
    (that toss in the hay).
Roll's gone ballistic –
    (like the barnyard
    pecking order).

Our maladaptive
evolution threw a spanner
to force a truer fit:
the power play judge,
    the gypped pawn –
can't cut it in the long haul:
love's all in the truce
    the touch
    the talk

__________________________
work
by Andrea Nicki

work work work work work
work week work work work work weak
you weakling work work work work wick
end of wick fire fire weak weak
FIRED? wormwormworm weasleweasleweasle
    “wonderful work” workworkworkworkwork
work work work work work
worthy worker won work wor k wor k
w o r k  w o r k
why? why work? work woes why why
weariness worts worts weight
witchy work wicked work weeds
what work watery work washed out
wasted worker

EVENTS
by Dorothea Grünzweig
Translated by Derk Wynand

A domestic tyrant the frontal bone
will not admit just anyone
then all at once we are
cut off

Gladly would we break through to fellow heads
since they remind us so strongly of home
don't manage it
not a trace of what
is being played out
only a front-garden flora to be seen
sometimes entangling sometimes
putting off
it develops hybrid sprouts

At the end of the world there is a house
in the house a human
in the human a hospitable gesture
that sets the table will
later be felled by ice
because human and guests can't
find each other

Often tables d'hôte become
    glacial tables

Events against the sense of time
A chest becomes
pervious to light and sound
the little bone shack swells
into a protective ribbed vaulting
for all human beings all
when beams of sound
fall
I. Key Peck
by Bryan Sentes

"singing the true song of the soul fitful at random"
just after five my third day there august fifth nineteen ninety two i popped open my first blanche
de chambly brewed in quebec biere sur lie white beer sudsy yeasty I don't know and wrote zero
five zero eight ninety two wednesday morning coffee jf’s adventures with idiot stick father an
hour girl friend fifteen minutes nine o'clock news a war crimes tribunal re genocidal camps in
what used to be yugoslavia when geoff called and i excused myself from meeting over a beer
tonight and still couldn't identify the flavour the beer had after two separated swigs which the
latter caused to remain some time after and wrote down after a reluctant swig more ovide
mercredi turned down for lunch uniformly a snag in the latest shuttle mission ten thirty the future
four ways ten thirty eleven at c prepositions three three point one three point two eleven forty
five lunch one o'clock reading the weekly world news jf! maria giant shark in lake superior andre
this elephant thinks he's a dog one thirty random round of role plays two forty five personality
test three fifty end comments must push harder give more tomorrow introduce in conversation
the future make a game of above under underneath below on and over go over first half unit one
homework in stead of reading pronunciation exercise they need directed exercises not randomly
situated conversations!

A LITTLE S & M
by Mark Farrell

Thank you for your submission!

Unfortunately, you don't meet our present needs. With the large number of submissions we already have;
we've decided not to accept yours.

We admired your "good ideas" though and thought you were "nearly there". It's just that things appear
slightly uneasy yet. We wonder what some further attention to your form might bring about.

Publishing is a difficult business, if for some reason you don't believe so - try your hand! Yes. Go ahead.
Try it.

Why don't you? Do it! (Do it!!!)

The size of our staff prevents our giving a more personal response but we'd like to at least say that we
enjoyed your submission - thank you for thinking of us. (And you were unsolicited as well!!)

Keep in mind that our editorial needs are always changing and evolving. Feel free to send along another
batch of poems (Batch! Batch!) but not until next year. (Batch!)

We wish you the best of luck elsewhere.

P.S. And sorry for the long delay in responding!
TWO POEMS
by Desi Di Nardo

**Dingbat in My Tea**

Courtly whorls with pouting ends
Spurred by the brittle dog-eared corners
Heave like a Spaniard's ruffled dress
And whirl past the spotlight's range
Tumbling down the plebeian page
They return as small, idle clouds of breath
Fishtailing behind silvery scales of ink
There, plebian to winsome words
They seep and sink into fragile cracks
Forgotten like a creamy haze in summer
And gather in that open saucer
Swirling, then, settling there
Only to be abandoned By a specious foretold end

**Corncrake Girl**

Outside the disconcerting whine of the rail
We settle under moon and stars
And surrender to the quivering dance of fireflies
While her shrill molesting cry assaults us and
Flings us by the hair out of womb and home
It is rasping and tampers with air and voice
Beckoning for us to listen and take notice
Of something we don't see
But only can hear Its strident call enters and bludgeons ear
Like the Q-tip that is pushed too deeply
It sterilizes and deprives us of the hushed ghost stories
We pass around and whisper to each other
Behind a crackling whistling fire
We set fitting marshmallow sticks down
And notice that she is no nightingale
Hobbling low above the grass
She cranes her curious head for the last time
And avenges herself by strewing the seeds of our stories
Overhead
Credits For: Iconoclast Rubber Stamps - A Mail Art project initiated by Vittore Baroni and continued by The Sticker Dude

I do not agree to allow Ragged Edge Press to reproduce the enclosed image as part of the Iconoclast Mail Art Project

The Sticker Dude
The Artists’ Memory

A multiple/picture/game
No rules – no limits

68 cards designed by 34 artists

AY-O
Julien Blaine
Claus Böhmler
Christo and Jeanne-Claude
Stefan Demary
Pierre Garnier
Jochen Gerz
Anna Giese
Wolfgang Hainke
Bernard Heidsieck
Volker Hildebrandt
Jenny Holzer
Allan Kaprow
Norbert Klassen
Jürgen Klauke
Jiří Kolář
Stefan Kurt
Vollrad Kutscher
Les Levine
Olaf Nikolai
Olbrich & Wollborn
Yoko Ono
Takako Saito
Ralf Samens
Fritz Schwegler
Mieko Shiomi
Daniel Spoerri
Ben Vautier
Jan Voss
Franz Erhard Walther
Petrus Wandrey
Lawrence Weiner
Emmett Williams
Robert Wilson

truth will change art

to change art change man

Limited Edition 250 numbered copies
Special metal frame to fit all cards
Price US$ 220 (incl. postage)

NO-Institute Niederfeldstr. 35 D-34128 Kassel Telefon/Telefax ++49 (0)561 88 46 94
TWO POEMS by
B.Z. Niditch

JASPER JOHNS’ "ACCORDING TO WHAT"

1. just to talk in stories
2. to what people
3. will do
4. in encounters
5. a thousand lines
6. comparatively speaking
7. in wakes of green
8. turned already indigo

WARHOL’S FLOWERS

1. replaced inviolate
2. by a calming noon
3. a little larger piston
4. by the crow’s feet
5. interior sunset
6. owned by celebrity
7. sleepy dreaming corollas
8. looking in the haze
9. for mountains
10. of petals
11. of each drowned image
12. exploding purple spots
13. outside the metal pale
14. of neon exhibitionists