

the ixnay reader

volume three

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Christophe Casamassima

Da Vinci's Lisp

I heard words
and words full
of holes
aching. Speech
is a mouth.

— Robert Creeley, *Words*

i.

every voice, pronounced face—
 speech in the mouth or
 speech is a mouth, sketch
in the ear badly drawn, does
 thought accommodate the antidote,
like 'sewn' & 'so forth'—every face
 produced new holes
 not unlike complaint

ii.

is it the throat shapes
an uncertain
 slant of poem
 how to—this archipelago
accumulates fictions
at its geographical center, silence
 completes the speech act,
 not absence,
 not the totality
 of facts & aphorisms—
 though habit preface
each music & exclusion

iii.

a delay

was discovered & became

denial: once indigenous

to the page, then exiled to the fringe
of the mouth, where it became
the voice, a gliss

caught

in the poet's throat

saying

nothing is necessarily

said: but the teeth

did chatter &

denied an opine,

prevailed

Stan Mir

from *The Rhino of Our Dreams*

The city a class in light moves a train
through a tunnel. Fear of beauty
is the fear to speak unknown names
in sleep. Wake up a light a city in which

you walk. Breath rots. Breath forgets
where it was & becomes yours to
forget who was cruel to it by breathing
it out after breathing it in.

Yes, it's a city
there are boys
who sit women
who walk parking
lots abandoned
traffic spare
tires gardens

Yes, this could be
a town it's a city
whose history is
the sky grows large
the trees grow large
the sun burns
the wall

Clearly no
commitment
from either
hand either
to hold or to
write Philly
is no joke
the couples at
the dark manor
drink Olde
English with
straws gripping
their lips
one hand
committed to
grasp the
can the other
to gesture loss:
I gave you
a 10 you
gave me a
dollar back:
I'm gonnna
kick their
fuckin' ass

Zeitgeist
in the grocer's
sign nothing

seems to happen
something happens
leaves burn

face the sun
no measure to
sky window

the president
meets the house
speaker whose

safe whose
a friend enough
not to be

fired Alberto
Gonzalez
is that friend

zeitgeist takes
more than one
always

go it's
the 1970's
right now

wires over
Telegraph
wires over

Walnut or
Chelton &
Pulaski a

place no one
knows broke
teach commitment

teach commitment
rain falls an award
released the piano

hangs around the bass
give a reason why
writing is significant

if writing only happens
when the world is tired
the piano the grand

piano is not through
walking & talking
Al Greer on drums

some voice over it
all voice need not be
found voice is

release voice from
commitment let it
play noise

call it music call
the rhino in the dream
a buck in reality

a roll
a tribute this
is okay

non-negotiable
cold the color cold
everyday for years

thank you
a job to do
what an American

should it be this
hard to suck
tired

morning
morning
morning

try & do that he
says snow about
his neck a lace

how to
write
any of it

rain
run in rain run in
rain

rhythm radio
rhythm radio
squandered

what have you done
I have done
interregnum

dishes in a xylophone
sink drum fill
no lead

just do time
the rest have
done time

the bills add
up when nothing
else does

what's new
this leaks as
does that

no NSA
agitprop necessary
a leak is a leak

the beat is the
beat we face
burning in the eye

a burning
hell ready
or not

you're it why
do we have stars
when we can't feel

the light in
the grocer's sign
the 'h' in 'the'

burnt out trapped
in non-light
crisp green cabeza

crisp green cabbage
3 for 88 cents
a deal w/o a piano

solo the earth is
frightening
to say we're getting

fucked w/o saying
we're getting fucked
impossible saying

this when getting
& having are much
the same

a broadcast service
Philadelphia
now in HD

wish a place
to walk to a star
in sight a friend

to talk to kind
of lonesome tonight
it's getting colder

wish the moon
would give some
light how to wish

this song would end
 this song
it doesn't end

somebody else
on the horns
tonight the alarm

the same aahng
aahng aahng
aahng aahng

it's the horn
holds together
the cart crash

bang across the way
exhaustion pushes
the envelope

Lee Morgan & Paul
Chambers love
 sleep

so the drummer
makes
possible

possibility
the whistle
listen

no trio to
obey no quartet
the voice

misunderstood
cadence
marriage

the back
beat that
keeps it

zeitgeist
zeit for ___
geist for ___

Bush says
lessons for
Iraq in Vietnam

we plastic we
windows we
storm we

don't need
to fast-forward
it's all here

each step
as significant
as toothpaste

Susana Gardner

from [*lapsed insel weary*]

[a room of one's own is
not a room is not a room
is not the state of paper]
as the room

defines itself as a pure
and singular understated
beauty she writes and she
writes this first

sees words as they are
spoken as a girl as opened
up night as books
unfolding as this

is what she needs first
opened and dog-eared
she would wake and write
down the

words she had read there
the sequence of the hum is
not far from her the
seamless

singing of the throat and
heart must not be lost
please,- do not differentiate
this from yourself

I have occupied many
cities kept them in my pocket-hold
as rooming as you as you have
London,-

in fall I think and think
of you wading through
the gray streets for pencils
your

skirts shift in the pull
in the sway of your step
it is like you are
floating

beautiful, of course,-
but forever poor underneath
thus stranded inadequate
[for and

for and for she her/e]
what gross foundational
lack or that strange
and

wary this she and
her predilection to
want [and] to
want

[a wary feathered
hopeful must wonder
surely inn—] so full of
vagrants

the kitchen a mess heat
and cockroaches infect
this houses veried faded
houses

lapsing since structure [her]
strung out young desert-
ers— dead shark sideways
dear,-

in the fridge hit in the head
with a bat thus laden pro-
posed as dinner every breath
sucked

from the heat from those
who live here despite this [
she] outward tropic beauty
insel sated

weary the book was on the
common room table and did
not go unnoticed as the
book

[by sea of what thinking

still - in way of dream what held me so close has not subsided - No

though perhaps more evanescent at times and quieter - alternatively

subtle I dreamt you manied]

grandmother grateful ever so

grandly promenading banded arm and arm with your daughter

sternally dressed beautiful as if it were all staged - a true

syncretism of light and its faltering way there is no evil only

in its interpretation as you and again myself feeling

somewhat histrionic daughter daughter

who had collected during the depression and war this

war for me to carry design of whimsy daughter born on the same

day as you and so fill the line space an alternate speech as it were I

your wild and rouged thin cheeks [this winged profile:

for color you say] of which had made you

now rests in me with what smeared eyeliner and rouge made

sure I read the words of the print back to you your mother (her

grandmother Sarah the same night she would join you the

it's tattered and yellowed face still new to your dark eyelets

unrepeatable line aperture in any age or yesterday always without

any sort of lapse of time or as it were being without elemental as such

ere so kept and still willing to nurture my young proclivity

what understood eurythmy

it up to do what was expected of you

of course you loved your family your children your husband your

in the muted seams of attic light [is not is not the] you who had

nearly died of this cutting [my to you - at this point you were

already in your 80's I was 19 - and would come to visit you in Vermont each

many-faced lost and brilliant mother] faith must heal [consort

of the] disastrous [we stand here] a wonderful reprove it

was so unthinkable to me at that time that a woman might be so

drawn outside of family and nesting all I knew apparently and

together untethered faith inheritable as hunger as paint still

fresh this scene a moment of as I was I felt this I was 19 then

she opened her journals to me showed me old war clippings from

re-creation the high of the intuit and truth of ones divided

must together know this we of necessity

with his older lover her capacity to see nothing even unusual in this

and what of what wills besling know what

might never come or be created young or old that I had previously

met and her being of physical relation seemed to make the experience

harbor this embroidered hour and *in the in the* of cloth we wring
that which is tatted and most
misshapen in this tide-lined in this tea-lit hour [yellow light]
that which always led her
from what [has long been] broken unstoppable knowing if
only as an intuit and then what leads her
from the window from [New England] as mountains so direct
blue cold a forever in ice so
immense even sadness can be wiped away erase the desert of her
name for her it is like
always without her own
identity and if for only a moment what was the instant so
eternal
Unstoppable and unapologetic [and always without] words to
describe it this version of selfhood
consider this: if made of matter: or Christ:- this is what she told
her she picked up the brush she- picked
up the paint the dough the pen or the scrap of rag at her feet
the picked up
the knot which twisted itself in her mouth is the evidence of
Babel her form is Pisa's leaning
[orphan- carry] this — what led her to sleep in the park near the
Art Institute's steps? portfolio clasped in her arms for rest her...

no one ever knew of where she painted -- another version: what
led you then she [her valley feed within Don't move don't breath
-- coffin a box - when mother is home at night she sit in [arm chair
valleys wherees.- when you had finally saved her enough to go
sixteen -- and so damn near impossible portraits - told her . of what
the dewridden grasses had . of what the breath of the red bird had
to get off the island -- and you never would -- but Saturday
Providence sure drawing classes 1916 the sun so hot then - felt
good on your cheeks out of a moving picture a breathing [str.]

for my sisters,-

[Q] wife and son now together
edged in the bearing of window but
by the meaning of Q he had
perceived the very being of and with
meaning which most did not ever
reach in the whole of England! it
might not rain and in so saying a
brightness emerged peculiar with
what hope could not conclude
and in so saying as a bird might
rest on the tongue someone had
blundered when he so had said
nothing else so retrieving into the hedge
on the tail of scattering birds and
reinvention son his ambling calf
confessed tense and distant
not to tickle under sprigs glance
again but Q - Q - his marvelous
forehead quivered but what then
takes him to R? or such
as failure and in its not
reaching?

[riddance]
there is this
waiting a wading
of sorts the sea
for her its

a b a n d o n m e n t
of blue or cast
angular lines held
together

what purple gaze
with blotted edging
of palette and
knife

two as one held together
he paints as if calculating
each moment

beyond the hedging
though not too far she
executor of her own see-
ing

her very seeing but
this is how I see it—
y e s.- this is how
I see it

[[[CODA]]]
[as extant ontologic investigation]

[&for &for &for she her/e]

[even as a state of being] [is not is not the] [first movement in
] [blue] [stranded] [is not is not the said crowned beauty]
[I meant garnet or sad cry of ruby] [friend] [of rigorous wanting
and song] [rigorous] [high] [point the to] [
vigorous she] [signified] [ren] [was] [mother] [and] [and
her] [was child] [her] [but implied] [her] [caught] [bird
] [moment] [as was child] [caught as in [bird] [moment]
[as the child] [distracted] [she read [her] [moments]
[say harmony] [our [small girl gestural] [from her] [confusion]
[this heron] [her sky] [as ship] [an] [by sea of what
thinking I dreamt you manied] [this winged profile: for color you
say] [is not is not the] [my many faced lost and brilliant
mother] [consort of the] [we stand here] [yellow light]
[has long been] [New England] [and always with-
out] [orphan- carry] [*her*] [*arm chair*] [*her*]
[*girl*] [lapsed insel weary] [Were a woman an insel]
[&manied] [indelible] [in flesh repeat] [even]
[once painted] [finite sister] [this] [uteral] [not]
[movement from the lighthouse lapsed surely in] [movement from
the note of father] [lighthouse,- yes] [pause] [a
room of one's own is not a is not is not a room is not
the state of paper] [a wary feathered hopeful must
surely wonder inn—] [her] [she] [the days]
[as we] [when she] [and all privately funded-]
[for and for and for she her/e] [and] [Q]
[riddance] [edging] [lighthouse] [as it is] [and yet, she was
then] [this she must find] [what] [small momenture]

Noah Eli Gordon

Poems

Is there ever a point in cultivating nostalgia?

It's not something
you water and
watch grow
over months.

It just happens.

It hits
you like
a thought.
No, that's not right—
a thought is something
you build.

I guess I
mean it's void of
fulfillment,
though
even that's
dubious ground
& who'd
want to stand outside
and wait
for the day's
instructions?

After all, it is
work.

We might not
agree there, but
those are the outfits

that clothe
our misconceptions.

You don't
cater to them by
letting them
prance around
full of self-
absorption.

Statues know
they're statues
and there's
no dignity
in that.

One might
go on
and on
to a fault
and
still feel like
there's a bit of the circle
one's forgotten to fill in.

It's like
the geometry
to planning
out a life and
then remembering
it was math that
held you back
in the first place.

The addition
of a blanket
drying

on a clothesline
in the
sun.

A porch
umbrella
locked
to a banister.

They're not
exactly
the images
of thinking,
but they're
here
in front of me,
saying
look, can't you see
the shape
of your
own head
without
staring
at yourself.

Reflections.
I'm through
with
reflections.

It starts
to amount
to something,
some kind
of big oak door
in the way
of where you

think you
need to be
and then
you're back
at home,
in bed,
regretful
for never having
tried the handle,
if there even
was one.

Self-conscious as a mockingbird.

That's the human
point of view
for you,
always ascribing
worth
to whatever fits
into its own agenda.

So what if
the weather tears
a big hole
into
your expectations.

Is it wrong
to wait
under
an awning
until the world
gets interesting again?
Is it wrong
to make
a list

so you can
have the momentary
pleasure
of crossing things off?

Isn't pleasure,
like rain,
always
momentary?

I wonder if
this is
a route
to getting
beyond
one's understanding.

The worst dichotomies
become
the most
ubiquitous
affirmations.

You unfold
a thing
to feel it
I suppose,
and then you
might cringe
or lunge
under a table.

The mouse probably
thinks
you're
the abrasive one.

So why don't we
let more things
happen
instead of
treating all
of it
like a puppet
with our hand stuffed into its guts?
Is this what glamorous
really means?

The right light
revealing
every stitch,
that it's all
an aborted
attempt
to try and tailor
the way
the background
looks.

I mean you're not
even
supposed to notice
what goes on
to the left or
the right.

It's the center
that matters
and there's never
anything
meaningful in that.

Someone
on the bus

has his knee
pressed against
your own, and
you know he's
cognizant of it,
almost saying
worship me,
I'm my very best emperor.

I used to see
the same man
several times a week
press himself against
teenage boys
on the train
in Boston.

Once, I saw
him
do it
to someone
in line at the grocery store.

It's sad when desire is revolting.

I'm better
suited
to smaller things,
but then I'm
outside
the subject again.

There is
the immediate
oddity
of discovering
a plaque

on a pedestal
in the park
on a path
you'd never
taken before,
and trying to figure out
why
someone had
chosen this particular spot,
but is it
different
if I'd said
finding instead
of discovering?

My friend Marcus
loves
to point out moments
in film when
the boom mic
appears
at the top
of the frame.

I guess artifice
is exciting
if you don't expect it.

Fireworks
on an off day,
which is not
a metaphor.

Language
can be efficacious
if you let it
wilt a little.

Somewhere,
there's a technician
stockpiling
x-rays
of the famous,
but they don't mind,
they've always
been see-through.

I wonder if they notice it
when
the boom mic drops,
when the weather
rearranges
whatever one
had planned.
I bet they're
impervious
though.

That's the better part
of desire,
to wear
your own house
like a turtle.

Forgive neighbors.

Forgive strangers.

Forgive bank tellers
forced into small talk.

There's no
significance
in forming the dots

into an image of
your own eye,
but we
sure waste a lot of time
in doing it.

Lately,
it feels like
trying on what you'd
never wear
or planning
a trip you're not
going to take.

Adventure is overrated.
That's why
I think art
is work.

MySpace Derrida

an abyss between the relation
the body count dipping
at the start of the New Testament
has to the million people
the Cambodian reds
would have killed
if they hadn't ran out of victims
for a teenager seriously injured
in a solo car roll-over
on a dangerous road
is the archiving impulse
as an act of violence
one less like the perils and promise
of kids growing up in the age
of PhDs marked by social networking
puttering around home, eating breakfast
and smoking pipes
and more like an appallingly
reactionary story which
shows that genre is not
just a descriptive term
on sunshine and dazzling snows
communicating only a fraction of meaning
yet failing to truly understand hysteria
over black metal song lyrics
She was 19, a little bit crazy
but no crazier than half a million
19-year-old girls chased by
philosophy grad students
interacting on a daily basis via
memorable neologisms
in Victorian poetry
The books, the jug band subculture...

We are ugly, won a biding war
for the right to serve speech acts
and even (or especially) mash-ups
to make one work that
will really drop your jaw:
Christopher Reeve & Rodney Daingerfield
are dead. It turns out that even among
the urgent appeal for a renewed democracy
for revitalized event mechanics
there is nothing outside
all sorts of technological
clarity and eloquence
I still haven't figured out
by pointing to the slippage
in intention and convention
and of course the annual red crab migration
I was skeptical when I heard how huge books
take up with such topics
Writers should be good
or at least good at watching documentaries

Jules Boykoff
Poems

The day the ice sheets began to crumble thunderously in a distant clap of mendacious quietude was a day like any other when particles hovered lovingly, mothers hummed geophysical lullabies, & whispers lifted from the frozen Earth

Or,

The Slow Motion Underneath

hundreds of questions pinched in the soil

little decisions thrumming the tundra

assumptions upon assumptions & water unfreezing

a billion years & that's all we could know

she was a force of geophysical scope

interglacial oscillation had nothing on her

myriad whorls swirling my assumptions

fragile atmosphere, all those tiny data

stratospheric chemistry, the slow motion underneath

so I go but go from me to we

so I go but go from me to we

The rhythms of happenstance were rolling thick in the socket of circulatory systems & an ever-shifting sense of place loosened mercilessly while it all seemed unseemly & we tried to glide beyond the thickness of theorems where historical recompense leavened reverently & dispossession scratched its name without shame in the sandstone

Or,

Poverty Is Not Pornography

barely audible as it was at the time

it all sliced mightily to your ethical metric

your innermost peripheries broken into flows

a blue halo surrounded the moon that night

reality is a wooden handle for a hatchet in the eye

a no-no boy in Heart Mountain, Wyoming, 1943

Thomas McGrath called it an alchemy of resistance

smoldering in the socket of pre-cognizant luminosity

Neruda said he did it so *everyone* could have servants

gunmetal sunsets wrenched asunder this time

arboreal detachment, preemptive karma unhinged

Your interest in governors, a trip to the coast, the Cannon Beach question, where sand meets the line. The line in the sand meant populace, commons, the line in the sand meant requisite peaceably, the line in the sand meant free-for-all aftermath, the line in the sand unfashionable but free

Or,

The jagged edge of quietude

frictionless daffodils not flowers but words

thrumming mightily through the porous past

worlds of daffodils all thick with friction

Wordsworth's daffodils knew not of this place

red wine, reverence, detachment—no one knew

untimely, untimely it will always be

a decade-old list of nice things to say

exactitude, tribute, the friction of distance

daffodils, a word-trap—it cannot contain

manymany miles notching the jagged edge of it

small fists of that which cannot contain us still

Some days are like pivots like 7 September 1995 when the world pivoted, collapsed, & edged over to me & my veiny forearms as I sat at a small round metal table on a public porch & looked into the vertiginous blue of my gloriously uncertain future

Or,

How It Happened

a bottle of vodka on the table

dahlias firing from the earth

clear days meant distant mountains

an Achilles a window to her present imperfect

for her a symphony of resistance that day

ribbons of diction, a bent wing mending

the topmost branches of a jack pine rising

terraced thoughts, loss bubbling under

stories of the her then, stories of her now

attraction pressed past the threshold that night

dahlias on fire, pivoting toward chance

The day she packed her suitcase and flew to England was a cloudy October day in Portland, Oregon when Hewlett Packard people were felon-booked, anti-war protests thronged the streets, steelworkers struck sixteen Goodyear plants, & eight more U.S. soldiers were killed in Iraq
Or,
The Tiniest Amount of Something

we thought of things we speak of
we dreamed of things we don't
notching notches on the ledger
cinnamon drifting in the wind
warming weather you are
everything times everything plus two
everything in my purview said yes
Puerto Angel, Oaxaca, Mexico
is where it happened in real-time
not in a clutch of black oaks
not cinnamon in the wind

Sometimes mathematical emancipation is not enough to help you out of bed in the morning after another data-rattle fire sale on the new-wave cutting floor stutter-steps your sleep into a system of thickened privilege meant for other people in other places who don't have the same fortune (oops!) luck as you

Or,

My Lucky Number

a kinetic moment of fortune

a picnic spinning on the beach

a handwritten statement of admission

while circumstance sits on the sofa

who knows what about whom?

we spoke of things so earthly

we dreamed of things to come

some people know their places

who knows what about you?

lacing our voices together

& feeling this tiny earth curl

*Eleven months in the Palouse meant star-lit red-wine time, the unplanned nexus of New York
and L.A., a Blue-Mountain Walla Walla near-year for four, with promises pulsing through the
foothills, trade-winds shifting the rhythms, peacocks dropping the pressure-clutch so here could
mean now & now could mean you this time*

Or,

Truing the Wheel Truing

a tangle of vessels thumping the blood

Chinese herbs in a ceramic white pot

a massive basket on a glassy-red bike

birds in a park—whimsy uncaged

downshifting, upgrading, warming our planet

from a window they saw you glide by on your bike

your yoga-calm eye in the storm of war

but the burma-shave signs read you-me, you-me

sewing machine sewing, scraps of fabric on the floor

out on the porch punching syllables in the night

running through wheatfields with the wind at your back

Hope is a category, an object, a toothbrush, an unmarked door, a metric of leisure, a decolonized mind. Hope is a volcano, a train platform, an island, a thumbtack, an impediment, a bombshell, an intellectual pitbull

Or,

Hope Is a Full-Time Job

where death means death & not the end

where closer to closure means not quite there

whereas closer to closure, closer to fine

where finite closure meant death without end

where closure lived swimmingly without love in the end

whereas love in the end meant closure to that question

where closer to death meant fine thanks, fine thanks

where your moxie rocked up life without end

where death meant life on a highway without stars

where death meant life on a highway without stars

whereby whereas whereupon we must live

Jen Hofer

Poems

“donner lake”

3 april 2006

*a cloudy los angeles * in anticipation*

there are no givens. the sky is falling. the wind seldom blows or the wind seldom stops blowing. a bridge has been built for ease of passage. we are not entirely successful in our endeavors. or there are no givens. the mysteries of a piece of paper in the hands that have formed its fibers. invisible generousities or happy to oblige or rather obliging. history reported a number of errors. rain making invisible marks against the pavement. and there are no givens. no greens beyond the succulents in rare violent bloom. no clouds beyond the atomized weather reported in the daily paper. no seasons for we have abolished seasons in favor of peaches year round or apples year round or radiation honestly described. if we had a center we'd have spokes. if we had doors, we'd be knocked and stopped open. the detainees move slowly through the corridors linked by government-issue chains. the lights dim and fluoresce. to give with no givens.

“davis dam is part of the parker-davis project...”

1 april 2006

untested delicacies rakishly in a sky again dewy with damp unknowns dislocated monthly. porous perimeters of what cannot be contained labeled “vapor” or “reiterate” or “extra extra” beside the cemetery pumping slick rainbow dollars into the chop-licked mouths of industrialized baby birds. unschooled, we await coincidence hungrily. by the time we notice it, the moon has already risen, the parade passed, neighborhood split. oil derrick spun chamber-like to become ornamental detail, history skidded to a false start, tight-lipped but well-endowed. am i saying too much? if so, turn the other cheek. “i have come to this work honestly” but one cannot convince. beyond the bounds of any left-leaning palm-linked deteriorated northbound train route no deterrence will dim the ‘round the clock daylight provided disproportionately via rigged communiqués at the backs of our prayerbooks. diligence is rewarded, but invisibly and then some.

“davis dam, rising 200 feet above the lowest part of the foundation...”
28 march 2006

*messob ethiopian restaurant * little ethiopia * homemade honey wine*

precisely not singly in exactly not lines the rain flips the world to movement, immediacy, a slower shivery swelter lit from behind or nowhere, light replaced palpable by air as we spin forward in tie to begin again at zero. happenstance requires no agreement in the rain, fire trucks incongruous, homeland security surveillance vans more so as the rain condescends to nestle our purported equality. repeated often enough is it true, as the rain repeats wheels unspoken against slipped asphalt leading to the home of someone we would have, had they not vanished into our foreign policy first, met and perhaps loved or at the very least tolerated? it is as true as the rain, which disappears upon arrival, or the actuality of each face, each person's capable hands, each sidewalk crack we either avoid or land on squarely causes dissent to cluster utterly unlike a bomb, to recognize as rain that we are here or to ask honestly why we are here or you, why are you

“california oil field”

25 march 2006

*plaza de la raza * outside on a lovely day*

trains chirp and wield, felt flutters or tithe untold beyond bidding, between the ties and slats slits and ripples, angled out to wider wishes. swans or the kids who survived or no commerce in the rutted wake of imprint. against the cement the sky is cement, doorways bricked, windows plugged with plywood, imprisoned patterns of light bruising polished stone, wax cast of feet in absence or where we would stand if gathering were in numbers permitted. if gathering were in numbers permitted what with our bodies would we displace? how would the green of accomplishment spill, by chain link and police baton bracketed, prodded into redefinition gently as a chokehold is gentle, or a freeway collision, or a hunger that daily returns, as if persistence could constitute sufficient cause, as if cause could hum its way toward effect but avoid the whole song on the way.

“summit — cajon pass”
20 march 2006

*topanga canyon * the noises of beauty * missing you*

here we are. it is spring and beside the rain-tinged wind the manzanita are busily being manzanita. or perhaps not busily, but just going about being manzanita, as things go about being things, as things are wont about being to go. the clouds are luminous and exceedingly cloudy except in the gaps which allow us to say “clouds.” i’m not trying to say “clouds” but if it needs to be said i’ll say it. it is spring and in an urban pasture seven deer graze and stare, lean and tawny, and congruent against the green. the pastoral intrudes with a thwack but it’s better than bombardment by air and land four years in a row. deer are better than children without limbs. clouds are puffier than shrouds. the manzanita are redly smooth, redly cold, not indifferent. night has appeared, the rain ascends, it is still spring, yearly interlude.

“tehachapi pass”

17 march 2006

*beautiful cloudy cold day * just off my bike * miss you*

it's the sound of an s. it's the sound of an e. the sound of the t in crickets. a watery y
it's the sound of an oo caught in a gargantuan throat. it's the n of humming while
running. the clouds press on the top of the day like pressing on somebody's head.
under the clouds the day has no head. it's the sound of an x after breath. it's the sound
of a chirping or whirring or list, a fast prolonged past its twist. it's a made sound under
the clouds, approaching, receding, spired or spined. the sound of a spiraling r made
pretty or tinny or sharp in its whirring. with no head, this day does not pint, it turns.
the anniversary of what or unfinished business in the abiding sound of no schedule,
the sound of the h in waiting, whistling

Being Somewhere

*

What I notice more than things are shadows of things. Which are things. No more than things. A ladder casts a ladder on a wall on which the light spaces between branches and leaves form a wall. The wall in question is at the North County Correctional Facility in Castaic, also known as Wayside Honor Ranch.

*

And if it becomes necessary for intellectuals to turn into snipers, then let them snipe at their old concepts, their old questions, and their old ethics. We are not now to describe, as much as we are to be described. We're being born totally, or else dying totally.

Yet our great friend from Pakistan, Fayiz Ahmad Fayiz, is busy with another question: "Where are the artists?"

"Which artists, Fayiz?" I ask.

"The artists of Beirut."

"What do you want from them?"

"To draw this war on the walls of the city."

"What's come over you?" I exclaim. "Don't you see the walls tumbling?"

— Mahmoud Darwish, from *Memory for Forgetfulness: August, Beirut, 1982*
(trans. Ibrahim Muhawi)

*

Our presumptions of innocence are locked up. I can't see the flag of the state of California and the United States flag but I can hear them jostling in the not-wind against the regulation flagpole. I am facing the other way. I am asking you to help me face the other way.

*

There are ways of being (reading, writing, conversing publicly) that reinforce the walls, stroke the walls, adore them into humming reifications of authority and division. And there are ways of being that draw the war on the walls of the city, and tumble the walls, and draw the tumbling of the walls on the air where the walls once were, and breathe in the air where the walls once were drawn in the air then breathe it out again elsewhere: particle miscegenation in the molecular collisions of histories and persons and things and thinkings. If we can't construct conflict without war, complexity with a little true friendship thrown in, then what can we do?

*

The scaffolding of electricity plays itself out innocuously against the prison wall. The light is not pure; it is mitigated against the edges of repressive architecture, thrown back against itself. Does this beauty matter? It's immensely difficult to think outside models of cost and effect. Insofar as our poetic process brings us into that thinking outside, it is a way to respond concretely, if not legislatively — in fact, exactly not legislatively — to the difficulties of our moment.

*

Written matter that can't ask itself questions without using the words of the questions to answer themselves with...

The cave, the camp, the caravan remain exemplary models for survival with very little more than food and song and vigilance.

I see that any activity that stays at that level is poetry.

Any intention that is vigilant to the points where Word and experience intersect is not going to be aggressive because very fleeting and therefore poetic.

— Fanny Howe, "Vigilance" (in *War and Peace 1*, ed. Leslie Scalapino)

*

Soon these hills will no longer be hills. The clouds are a non-congruous reflection of the shapes formed below the horizon line. When we say it's cloudy, we mean a shadow has been cast. It's not that they're not hills when the houses are gouged into them, it's that they languish in moneyed sameness.

*

There's a difference between doing something to get somewhere and doing something to be somewhere. We might think that everything we do casts a shadow, whether or not we see it. A non-fossilized record of another other world regardless of light. Whether or not we see it.

Mark Wallace

from *Notes From The Center On Public Policy*

Questions came up about possible successions. Who was next in line to be first in line, to what extent conditions were necessary, who had the status or presence and who might end up dead in the road. Did the group require a card, an ability to travel, the desire to sit around the table as if hoping to be in touch with, or to touch, just those crowds in just those places necessary to struggle through if a unit didn't want to be left behind, the glass windows permanently closed to the sweeping view of the lake, the wine budgeted, the mirror covered with resemblance? Why then not write, in pink lipstick, a history of refusal directly onto the reflections of ever more smiling sophistries, as if refusal was neither the thing nor its reflection but caught, impossible, on a surface that was also neither though nonetheless visible as it vanished into the non-space where space had left its unwanted detritus not like dust but like the memory of dust. The two or the three or the four or the seven arranged themselves pointedly about the checkered table cloth, having said elsewhere those lines they really intended while here the lines resembled x-ray swords, unsheathed, that preferred to do battle simply because no one claimed to have the power to light them, even as this one or that glowed more wildly, like light itself had become a con game against a backdrop of virtual overkill quick to mention the pampered or the poor or the grasping competition for a pot to piss in.

Phone calls erupted in rooms as much as once an hour to ask for donations, to sell insurance, to talk about rates and percentages and costs per minute, to offer gifts that would cost more than if they'd actually been purchased. First there was silence on the other end, then a hollow click, then the voice, insistent or awkward or mumbling or metallically hollow, speaking rote memorizations that were almost, not quite, standard enough to make it seem there was no specific throat and tongue behind them, no torso, no fingers and legs stuffed in some thin seat in some small cubicle with walls only four feet high so that the callers could not see each other but could nonetheless monitor any deviations in routine by the disembodied voices that floated past and that stayed the same for a year or a month or a week or sometimes no more than a day before drifting out again, still disembodied, never to return to this set of arranged cubicles but perhaps to find another soon enough. Hearing this or that voice, did some listener on the phone cling to the receiver, asking questions, as if to draw some mutual emptiness closer across the electric connection? Did some other listener go so far as actually to buy, to request the forms and look forward to perusing them in detail, thrilled by the opportunity to pay for protection against uneven balances in the possibility that chance could be controlled? It was like a conduit into the hidden circuits of misplaced secrets, devotions offered only to the night air, bodily mutations enacted with a cord behind a screen, not watched but

vibrating, throwing those who had felt it back against whatever solid support first lodged itself in their way, muttering to themselves “what shadow has crossed me when I was only trying to buy bottled water and a loaf of processed bread?”

How would this or that body betray itself and give way? By being too tired to look at the street before crossing? By falling asleep in a meeting? By buying the medicine and forgetting to bring it home? By having too many drinks, then one more, and then another? By shutting a finger in a door or cracking a toe against a table or bruising a knee against a fence? By sitting hunched in the dark staring at a screen? By sneezing or belching or farting? By snickering or groaning? By purposefully saying the wrong thing to the wrong person as if that could relieve a throbbing behind the eyes? The rigidity announced itself to its operator in the form of back aches, stomach aches, hangovers, sore muscles, rashes, bruises, blisters. Responses called for objects properly shaped, pills, liquids, ointments, metal support apparatuses, as if treated properly, the intersecting synapses would never have to decay.

Some manuals claimed that with slight adjustments the harnesses would not remain harnesses, that despite the tendencies of those who had arranged rows of harnesses in infinite variations and placed them beatifically in all sorts of passified pseudo-rustic settings, the harnesses might be reclaimed by those who were harnessed in them, a wild release of running, dodging, prancing, pursuing, lying down together in the artificial turf glistening with exuberant sweat. These manuals claimed that fully articulated renunciations, refusals, and analyses that opened the dark machines to the light of common day crisscrossed just under the gleaming streamlined surfaces that seemed with their reflections to deny that any motion could lie beyond the perfect picture of the viewer viewing the viewer that was sold in millions of mega-ton cartons. Details were provided on how one could, at any instant, spring forward with the sudden solidity of the hidden. But why, then, were most still staggering under a load of visual anaesthesia, or thinking of sound as the opposite of noise? One could shout “freedom” to a roomful of processing relay synapses that would hear the shout as “slavery” as if a voice scrambling device had been built into the notion of oxygen. Were acclimatized reflexes therefore to stop shouting, to search for an even more refined scrambling? If there was nothing but translation, did it have to follow that there was nothing to translate?

Through the wires ran a crisis about legitimacy and how to obtain it through the seizure of already illegitimate principles. Usually, descriptions of the crisis sought singular origins, this or that bleeding in the heart of a demon exposed in most houses on any street.

Legitimacy could be attained through institutions or claimed by refusing them, by establishing a group or denying one, blocked arteries defined by who no longer pumped or was pumped, who sat or stood or bowed or sank their teeth into conveniently displayed rear ends shaking in the proper postures. While the discourse stated that the issue was at stake, backstage whispers sought out who stood in shadow financing the terms of the issue poised on its always precarious limits. Every speech, every hand raised or lowered, every shout or isolating glare apparently considered its relation to this maintenance. When night followed its predictable curve, however, in silence or anxiety or the fullness of a stare missing its longed-for connection, supplicants and applicants questioned why they seemed to speak as if they were not themselves but instead somebody who stood beside them who they were desperate to please and who shook them with contradictory pettiness. Was that bifurcation why those who were heard laughing or seen searching soon found their faces on a wanted poster or, more likely, woke up one day to notice, almost it seemed by accident, that their signatures had been dropped from the most respected lists?

Waves of explanatory materials collided ruthlessly in the aether of publically available terminologies, unencumbered by the need to prove what supposedly supported them. The claim that a thing operated in a certain way became in fact the thing itself, whether or not the thing operated that way, because the claim appeared instead of the thing in any venue developed for an examination of the thing. Simply, there were no things, only claims about things, according not to the claims about things but to the platforms that controlled the claims about things, platforms that were neither claims or things but moved, shimmering in a vibrant non-space that seemed to most observers more like space than actual space. Sometimes, of course, a thing interrupted, bumping up against the claims about it and momentarily dislodging them, although new claims landed almost instantly on the thing that, not quite what or where it was before, had nonetheless disappeared again.

Despite any number of denials, proofs, theories, exposures, and hypocrisies, all of which undulated in a nuanced skepticism, units of all sorts—suburban families, urban rehabilitation proselytizers, artists careening towards abandoned niches that might make them the latest thing by coming back to old objects in new ways—still turned their eyes upwards, seeking to sweep aside the clouds and atmospheres and asteroids and galaxies to be at last immersed in some greater self or non-self, some physical lurching beyond the physical, some absence or essence or absence as essence. The sky, gateway to a beyond; the body, gateway to a hidden interior within the interior that made the interior no longer interior. In fact some said that hands, feet, eyes etc. were neither the opposite of the

essence or of the absence but a limited disjointed continuum thereof, a journey or a pathway or a process or even, perhaps, a spherical or non-spherical tangential deep image dream relation, combustible, frenetic, calming, centering, terrifying as the case might be, dynamic in its misconceptions and sudden fruitions, its potentially jovial camaraderie or isolated post-solipsistic chamber music of the mind at odds. Debate then followed: a good thing or bad? A grab for power, or the desire to give it away? A criticism of the social and political things that were, or their basic support? An opportunity or hindrance? That which rescued the floundering from self-absorption, or a fundamental desire not to pay attention? What was certain at least was that the question—and it was occasionally put as a question—could under no circumstances go away, for as long as one believed in a this it was impossible not to posit a not-this, or a this less limited than what this was currently supposed to be. To be not all was by definition to imagine all or at the very least to imagine whatever stood outside not all.

There was something good to be said for the fact that by general agreement, statements like “I’m going to cut off your dick and stuff it in your mouth” no longer had any place in public debate, or were useful goals for strategizing even in those cases when the strategizing could be forever concealed, although it was still true that the language sometimes occurred and was acted out. But the places in which such things happened usually remained obscure. General agreement, of course, was hardly total agreement, and certain individuals and groups still resorted, almost daily, to such brutalities when disgruntled enough by some volatile and deadly combination of their own beliefs, access to weapons, and a distorted if powerfully insightful tingling because of the taunts, smacks, refusals, and basic indifferent chill that lurked just beneath the sheen of new hybrid metals, fancy signs, and growing product options along a range of orchestrated necessities and desires. It was still possible to be a scientist and get stabbed repeatedly by a ritual sword that one had purchased on an overseas vacation, an X left in one’s back by the most disturbed member of a group of post-high school devotees of witchcraft, video games, and Internet chat rooms—the 21-year old body standing triumphant over the gasping body (both soon to be the subject of research) with glazed eyes, howling, later relaxing with the group already beginning to contradict each other’s statements and distrust each other’s motives, lacking only sufficient resources and charisma to cause the greater damage that more well connected covens or congregations or organizations might manage.

The pace of tasks sped up often into a whirl then abruptly stopped, leaving those performing the tasks moving in frantic motion which could suddenly have no object or destination. Faced with the feeling that beyond the performing of tasks, one no longer

existed, policy recipients invented strategies to convince themselves of the need for further energy expenditures and ways of channeling the often dizzying excess. Frenetic circling sometimes had to be driven to the point of fever and collapse so that the body could learn to slow itself. In fact techniques could be implemented to induce temporary illnesses either physical or emotional: drinking binges, fights, temper tantrums, random sexual advances, hours spent staring obsessively and unnecessarily at computer screens. Thus a cycle of tasks, then sped up tasks, pointless frenzy, collapse and recuperation created a calendar of events never noted as such but just as powerful, if differently so, than the calendar of hours, days, weeks, weekends and holidays which more officially organized the production cycle of ephemeral units who, even as they accepted the cycle, tracked their refusal of it by creating their own cycle in response if not outright opposition, although outright opposition took over sometimes, frequently in semi-articulated displays of petulant negativity, the inability or refusal to go to work or pay one's bills or otherwise act according to a list of procedures for functioning usually referred to as responsibilities.

According to many, including even those who claimed a radical stance, the only success was institutional, and the only recognition worth having was official. Not only did most subjective interstices fail to look for an outside or acknowledge the existence of one, they didn't want one even if it was only imaginary. There's no getting away from here, the authorized conference spokesheel would say, and what it meant was there was no getting away from *it*, which would have been no more than obvious except that it offered itself as proof that some basic understanding had been deeply changed, opened up, as if the gorgeous surprise was not just its own but also everyone's at finding it the one to speak through the microphone, a surprise it felt more comfortable attributing to the gathered spectators who had lurched into the chairs through an invisible set of needs, commitments, and desires never exactly shared but all generally shared, since these related sets had brought them to the room. A conflicted position stood up and wondered aloud whether it was a good idea for anyone to be here, and murmurs around the room attributed such wondering to guilt, to the idea that the conflicted position felt unworthy of admittance to this hallowed space of frame walls, hotel carpeting, and glasses of ice water which clinked in refrain to both amplified and unamplified statements. That such a conflicted position might not have wanted to be there but knew at the moment no better options could not be understood, much less spoken. After all, the microphone had already said there was nowhere else to be, and all ways of wanting the room to be turned inside out, sucked out, spit out or variously imploded whole or in sections had been said to be not simply fantasy but deeply backwards, perhaps even, most pejoratively, fundamentalist. No one claimed the place was a perfect place, said the voices making claims about the place, but one had to

accept like an unspoken oath that this was not only the only place but also the best possible under current circumstances, while one simultaneously had to criticize it, apparently for its own good, from every conceivable angle.

Divya Victor

gage [iterated]

I told no one: regardless, there wasn't a viable translation or explanation.
and there she will be shriven— noted in the text.

— PATTIE MCCARTHY, *bk of (h)rs*

Anyway there is no use in not forgetting what you know and we
do not know what happened to her

— GERTRUDE STEIN, *Everybody's Autobiography*

thrust and knot narrative into something recognizable, something indelible
a turn pivot volta a 'however childhood'

interstice: a henceforth already referred to

All Casebook notes have been copied from the book *Confronting the body: The politics of physicality in Colonial and Post-Colonial India*, edited by James H. Mills and Satadru Sen, Anthem Press, 2004.

Some other appropriated material is from popular nursery rhymes, idioms, mottos and William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, *Titus Andronicus* and *King Lear*.

a chorus of hips at this threshold

if you part the hair in the middle on your seventh burdday your horns will show you will have to give away your polka dot headband and your cap from that ooty holiday with the buttons no when you vomited in the bus on the way down to buy tinned sardines and remember when you ate your first marshmallow you lied about liking it no then so your horns will be extra longer then you'll have to stop going to school and D'Souza miss may break another ruler on your knuckles thats it then you won't be able to draw straight margins in red pen so you'll fail maths and fail biology because you won't know how to draw a person right without a ruler your spine won't be like the other kidses then what will you do you'll beg in front of that busstop with the leperman danceman and you'll have to believe everything he sings and give him your hands and foots and tooths and that'll be your lesson like the time when we were kneeling on rocksalt remember with our tongues hanging out like pomeranian aunty's pomeranian I don't think we should be friends with her anymore my mom says that she buys her hair from poor people in cochin who have to be bald so their kidses can go to school and be like us atleast but I don't think they can have peppermint pocketmoney like us if you onceagain spend allofit on packet pickle then we won't have any left for tomatosauce for our friday samosas are you still there

yes

interim mirror turn under urns and rims of other lives

Casebook IA, patient no. 175, 6 March 1882

Lalooie. f. 30. mania. Mussul, Dullal. 6 March 1862

“October. This woman was sent in by City Magistrate, stated to be her first attack of insanity but I had her as a Lunatic patient in the Jail Hospital three years ago...”

“On admission she was very violent and excited, would not wear clothes, tore everything to pieces and struck and bit every body approaching her. It was necessary to put her under restraint, a Blister was applied to the nape of her neck and sharp purgatives administered. Gradually the symptoms began to subside [and] she took to spinning the wheel.”

served in a sentence the whit of knuckles “How now, nuncle! Would/ had/two
coxcombs/ two daughters” whither to elocute “How now, nuncle! Would/ two
daughters” wooden Faber-Castel ruler “Rapping at the windows”
something of lentils still palms flushed this was a matter of forgetfulness
and so a smudge of chalk yelp of flesh a friend quivers at his desk
quill and rubber this is so “Rapping at the windows/Crying through the locks”
garlic and milk some ilk of meal under the nails still “How now/ two daughters”
tremble and plums in the pocket damp in the pinafore this is so how my
marrow clogged my bath if I stayed in it too long “Are the children all in bed? It is
now eight o’ clock” pairs of lead eyedness how my throat flounced to the floor
one could have wished for arrows but puns escape gaping quivers “How now/
daughters” belt about middle of a riff fretting the portly torso harboring too
many breakfasts “Be just and fear not” on the buckle
this too was a matter of forgetfulness “How now”

in the middle: a kitchen, copper, a chorus of hips and story

appalled you lift a tea cup an encounter without doily
reminding you speechlessness has been called elegant ----
& has been wept into his hankies by garbo by bergman
his shoulders---- a film-noir surface of exceeding absorbency

for fear that you will lose your appel in the purl of your chiffon you iron the scape----
a mouth rushing with doves
& this too is his for you---- soubriquet
a self gushing with assumption
the receding paraphrase the marvel of linnets miles into sea
nothing miraculously appears here in tweeds
& the boutonniere's cause more ambient than motific

a chronology of lips

Casebook IA, patient no. 56, 24 September 1860

Mhiboobun. f. mania.

“On admission was very sulky and refused her food. Afterward became violent and tossed about her head and arms, blister was applied and aperient given. Since then has been quieter and takes her food well.”

Annual report of the Insane Asylums in Bombay, 1874-1875

“...there were six cases of refusal of food...he had to be fed with the stomach pump regularly for about two months; he was in consequence very much reduced. One day he was accidentally given some beer, which had the desired effect, as he began to eat soon after of his own accord.”

much too midnight capillary braids wicking the carouse of kerosene “How came she by that light?/Why it stood by her/light by her/continually” all yellow and waiting for peels pitch of stairway and sinking “Hot cross buns/one a penny” blow through curtly this is so “How came she by the light?” wracked by comb and there were excuses to be made “Why it stood/her/by her/continually” how in darkness my skin noised off the flesh then mauve mapping “two a penny/If you have no daughters” this was a matter of forgetfulness and so scald the tenders bubble and little hand stubbing numbers “Why/by/her/continually” ache custard from a bowl quietly morsels of sweven song instead times tables “If you have no daughters/Give them to your sons” wattle shoulders hurdled corners of curds and why this was a matter of forgetfulness “How came she by that light?” this is so a cousin’s curls dawdle in the doorway fenugreek and mint a disquieting elopement lodged in the gall “If you have no daughters” “one a penny, two a penny” trounce and wallop yoke of cotton mother of pearl buttons this is so “by her/continually/by that light” how my chest held its leman
this too was a matter of forgetfulness “by her/continually”

one patch resembling thistle but it is not

okso if your burdday is on friday then anyway we won't have to save our peppermint pocketmoney because at your burddayparty they'll have cutlets and tomatosauce won't they have cutlets and tomatosauce will they tell me no

yes

my mom says that your mom buys the cutlets from a store and she can't really make it herself because noone can make powderbreads so small-ly anyway even with a new mixie that we bought for last diwali when we had the hundredandtwentythree guests not including me and babu and my parents so if the cutlet store is closed or the cutletman is dead then they'll not have cutlets and tomatosauce then we're dead too because we won't have the peppermint pocketmoney to buy our own will you be sad even though it's your burdday and you'll have all the thousands and thousands of presents do you think they'll give you that barbie with the stethoscope and the banana bandana do you

yes

one pact resembling a past but it is not

Annual Inspection Report of the Dispensaries of Oudh for the year 1872

"I must say I never saw a more happy or contented looking set of lunatics; they work both in the gardens and at the looms with pleasure to themselves...singing blithely at their task."

Annual Report of Lunatic Asylums in Punjab, 1871

"The insane are not slow in sagacity and the power of comprehending what is done for their good and thus will appreciate kindness."

Annual Report of the Insane Asylums in Bombay, 1874-1874

"[Beef] tea was also given by injection through the rectum."

lap swathed shore of grain and rice plate rinsed with warm water this is so
later a group gathers under thatch for the threnody of rain "tween her stumps doth
hold/The basin that receives your guilty blood" rope and macaroons "Mother may I
go to swim?" how my chin inched away to breathe chlorine warrants eggs in the
hair and so scold the towel off eyelet and hooks and undoings of small
ribbon from the plaits "tween her stumps doth hold" "Yes my darling daughter"
this was a matter of forgetfulness lumps of flour boat in a stew choice cutlery
slugging the gills this is so "Fold you clothes all neat and trim/But don't go near
the water" how my feet are glutted into socks in summer "tween her
stumps/blood" larded air the bulk of monsoon "Fold/don't go" this is so
olio gloss a neighbor decides against the sugar shellings conch eratos cowries
baby's ears whelks bleeding tooth ark "The basin that receives/guilty" gurgle
such dimples off chunked coconut wrapped in newspaper fiddle after noon
sleep through tea cuff roll and clout how my cheek ground aback and into my
face

this too was a matter of forgetfulness "tween her stumps"

remembering is an act of dismemberment
and for this we must keep our passports ready

here is your anatomy so full of corners----
a spectacle at all the right angles

irk of nettles in your hair
fanning the myth quite cross-eyed in your corset
lipping the way out----
all knives & ash & vowels

allegedly----
you mean to accuse but you rest in allograph
& they write your name in ledgers

state this and construct a body so inedible
that its addled act is one of speaking in tongues and torsos

Letter from the Commissioner of Rawul Pindee to the Punjab Government, 1869

“Dr. Lyons caused an enema to be administered in his own presence to a Pathan prisoner, who pleaded epileptic fits as a reason for not working. Dr. Lyons evidently considered the man to be shamming, and he adopted the enema, knowing it to be the most hateful infliction to a Pathan as a punishment and means of curing him of malingering.”

“...enema administered in public, instead of within the patient’s cell or in the hospital”

“The man died three days after.”

Report from Dr. Lyons to the Assistant Commissioner of Rawul Pindee, 1869

“I considered the man was a malingerer, and applied the most disagreeable treatment appropriate for epilepsy...if the man be really ill the treatment will do him no harm; if he is malingering the treatment will still do him no harm. I ordered the man to have an injection of warm water to clear out his bowels...the Native Doctor reported to me...that he had died about 6 o’clock, and that he did not think he had died from illness, but from grief or shame.”

muck about ground flanks a corner and something squats to eat its carrots
kneecap craters scrape gutters for tadpoles room for retch in the bucket rag
the mouth “What stern ungentle hands/lopp’d and hew’d and made thy body
bare/Of her two branches” this is so “One, two” swift ifs sweet tea “One, two,
buckle my shoe” whip swift knee swot “lopp’d and hew’d and made thy body
bare” how my shins buck into the wall and mischief hung about bulbs this was
a matter of forgetfulness “three, four, knock at the door” hot rice sits in a tin
and sweats till lunch loaf the halls warbling and so “five, six, pick up sticks”
hush and flog “bare/of her two branches” all raging mustache and cache crocheted
into the bunching socks “lopp’d and hew’d and made thy body” how my
hands knotted my guts to the pews this was a matter of forgetfulness cursive note
of ought and could in red in the notebooks kneel and keen near where they come
to sharpen the pencils elbow bandied to hold a tongue this is so “seven, eight
lay them straight” strokes “nine ten” marks of bright pupils this is so how my jaw
fluttered open

this too was a matter of forgetfulness “What stern ungentle hands/made thy body”

take narrative torsion from the torso and interpret
this dialect as voice as view in verse as verisimilitude inversed

it is true---
you confuse ecru with ostrich & take ana for narrative---
my dear waiting for the applause to yaffle round you

pose for a photograph---
knees frothing an appeal into archives
powdered with dust as your face with talc as the mew with cuttlebone

not telling is more telling than telling

Annual Administration and Progress Reports

Bombay presidency, 1873-1874

“On a patient being brought to the asylum he or she is placed in a single room for two or three days, well washed, carefully fed, the state and conditions of excretions and secretions examined...”

Bengal, 1867

“The lunatics...are bathed daily...The dirty and intractable patients are rubbed with mustard oil culee made into a thin paste with water and then washed under the shower bath. This cleanses the skin and leaves it soft, and it is better than soap which makes their skin dry...”

Punjab 1874

“Nothing can prevent entirely some of the most debased of lunatics from being guilty of filthy actions, but they are cleaned and washed and all traces of pollution at once removed.”

the stillness of windows water gars all garb off broad eyed and perched dry
on the edges of some mouth evidence of breaking bird “the is the way we wash our
hands, wash our hands, wash our” gruel and balking “What is it she does now?
Look, how she rubs her hands” woolgathering wee bundle scuttles Bata feet and so
the lashes unfastened drudge the thing like sull or plough off a mattress
outside the hush of thrashing wheat “this is the way we brush out teeth, brush our
teeth, brush” how my ankles ground bone into wet tile this was a matter
of forgetfulness look to the face hoary with fash vinegar lime vex onions and whinny
into the tureen “Look how she rubs her hands” this is so an elder weathers
folding laundry “this is the way we” mustard dried chillies bay leaf temper
“What is it she does now? Look how she” how my scalp scrubbed itself to sleep
“comb our hair, comb our hair, this is the way we”
this too was a matter of forgetfulness “how she rubs her hands”

one past resembling one arm hung on a shoulder
is really the index and thumb holding a tongue

but what if your banana bandana gets caught in your horns luckily noone in my family has horns you know when babu was eight even he didn't have horns but he was in the hospital when his appendisights exploded and there was a whole bucket of blood they had to give him cow blood because no one had any more blood to give him cows have pureblood anyway do you think his horns fell out then like milkhorns anyway I don't even have milk horns because we're brahmins and brahmins have a special blessing from god also our president is a brahmin so maybe if you weren't a christian you would be ok you know you're atleastnot sobad as those other christians in madras I heard that they drink wine and all and dance even their parents dance and those christians kidses never get scolded so they grow up to be street womens I think anyway I hope you have a good burddaypardy I'm not going to barathanatiyam class so I can come early and help you blowballoons will you have balloons will you have baloons hello

yes

ok then I will come early and what color is your burdday dress I think you should ask your parents for a yellow one so that you can wear it for teachers day parade also also maybe get a fringe cut so your horns won't show that much orelse everyone else not me but everyone else I said I won't I'm your bestfriend everyone else will laugh behind yourback anyway I'll lend you my plastic ruler for monday because if you get smacked atleast the ruler won't break don't worry I won't tell anyone else what happened ok

ok

interrupt this for more is easier to resemble than less

the mistake was a full parlor was a pouting room ----
darling----
the mistake was a mouth barbed wide open

hence left with /a/ spindle /a/ harp/a/ head of hair /a/ bag of crumbs /a/ hood /a/
mattress & pea /a/ slipper /a/ baby /a/ needle & straw & whiteness
/a/ box of matches /a/ dead gran for anchor /a/ swan /a/
winter & duck chocked with plums----

you are now otherwise occupied----
are your own alias

Harold Abramowitz

Ghost Because

It is the night, and there is the night, and there are nights. Always nights, and always gestures. Romantic gestures. Still, there is some rumbling over here, some rumbling over there, an over determination of our species, of the way we run through the jungle, on this night, on every night.

He is trapped in his container. She is living in the cemetery. They meet, they give their hands to one another, they exchange glances, and then it becomes all about the bloody stumps, and then the bloody stumps are extended, distended, turned into cameras, and, what is worse, gestures.

There is blood on the road. The cars crash in the distance.

LISTEN TO THE CARS CRASH IN THE DISTANCE.

By the side of the road, we live by the side of the road, the road controls us, we have always lived by the side of the road.

“Don’t crash.”

“Please drive safely.”

“Be a safe driver.”

“For your own safety and the safety of others, please, direct your car in a specific direction at all times.”

However, there is time for mistakes.

However, most mistakes are the same mistakes, are made over and over again.

The gestures really are remarkable, however. And there is no beginning and no end to these gestures.

Each one of them wants to kill, really wants to kill, at various times.

There is a demon in the cemetery. The demon wears galoshes and crawls around on his hands and knees.

All of the above can be performed, can become highly stylized, if need be. But determining the amount of props necessary for the performance can be a chore, can easily become a distraction.

It is slightly ridiculous, all of this is slightly ridiculous. And then having to determine the amount of agony, the level of agony: There is perpetual screaming and perpetual confusion.

There are ghosts here in the house, too. But back to the cemetery...

The function of the theater is to give expression to this force of death, but not death, however, not death.

He smiles. He is a scholar. He is a liar. He loves to listen to his own endless lectures. There is lice in his hair. Indeed, his entire body is covered with lice and other parasites. And the fact is, he does not exist.

For this performance, we rely on the structure of the cemetery. We rely on the ritualization of death. Yes, there are better circumstances for death to occur in, there are better ways to let death out of its box, so to speak. He smiles when he says this. He smiles and he holds his hand out. He is asking you questions about your life. He is very friendly.

“Do you have any relationships you care about?”

“Do you have many friends?”

And then the end comes. It comes sooner than anyone expects. The end comes and there is dancing. The end comes in the form of a dance, a dance that is done by everyone, all the time. At every moment there is a dance. The dance is the dance of death. A death dance.

You see, he is lying again, lecturing again, keeping up a certain kind of appearance based on his own idiosyncratic reading of the situation. All of this is based upon the reading.

There are no games to play. Nothing works. We can go here or there. We can suspend our disbelief permanently.

We take the children by the hand. They are playing on the grass. The children are having fun. We have entrusted our children to the care of a stranger. The stranger is, of course, dead, and our children are in danger, always in danger. There is danger in the way they play on the grass on a summer night with a dead stranger.

DON'T LET YOUR CHILDREN PLAY WITH DEAD STRANGERS ON THE GRASS ON SUMMER NIGHTS.

But it is very easy to lie.

He is a liar. He has lice in his hair. And their play is, their game is...I can't see them anymore.

It is not pleasant when children get lice. Lice is difficult to deal with. Hard to kill. But children often get lice, especially when playing with dead strangers.

This is certain death.

You are watching death enacted.

This is real death, but I wasn't watching. I didn't want to watch the dance of death for too long, it made my eyes hurt. And this is agony. And I am in agony.

We are on stage at all times.

Graham Foust

A Poem

POST-IT

Today our son
stood on a dead
(I think) baby
bird and touched that
sculpture of that
rabbit as if
it were alive.

contributor bios and acknowledgments

Harold Abramowitz is a writer and teacher from Los Angeles and is author of a chapbook, *Three Column Table* from Insert Press, and of various other works. Harold co-curates the Late Night Snack literary cabaret series at Betalevel in L.A. He is also co-editing a new short-form press called Eohippus-Labs.

Jules Boykoff is the author of *The Slow Motion Underneath* (Dusie Press, 2007), *Once Upon a Neoliberal Rocket Badge* (Edge Books, 2006), and *Beyond Bullets: The Suppression of Dissent in the United States* (AK Press, 2007). He lives in Portland, Oregon where he curates the Tangent Reading Series with Rodney Koeneke and Kaia Sand: www.thetangentpress.org/readings.html.

Christophe Casamassima is the proprietor and editor of Furniture Press in Baltimore, and the editor of *Ambit: Journal of Poetry & Poetics*. He has recently published poems in *American Letters & Commentary*, *Cue: A Journal of Prose Poetry*, *the Denver Review*, and *88: A Journal of Contemporary American Poetry*. He also has chapbooks available from [limited editions] (*qui/etude and Mythography*), above/ground press (*Septology*), and King of Mice Press (*The Sarah Quatrains*). He is currently a board member of the Towson Arts Collective and finishing his Masters at Towson University.

Graham Foust's most recent book is *Necessary Stranger* (Flood Editions, 2007). Director of the MFA Program in Creative Writing at Saint Mary's College of California, he lives in Oakland with his wife and son.

From New England, **Susana Gardner** is poet and writer who now lives in Switzerland. Her poetry has been translated into the Italian and French as well as Icelandic. Her first chapbook, *To Stand to Sea*, was published last year by The Tangent Press and is presently being translated into Italian by Canterena Press, Genoa. Her poetry has also appeared in several anthologies, including "131.839 slög með bilum" (131.839 keystrokes with spaces) NTAMO, as well as *Not for Mothers Only*, a collection of poetry by women from FENCE BOOKS. She edits Dusie, the virtual online poetics journal and paper press, all of which can be accessed via www.dusie.org and www.dusie.etsy.com. Most recently she has read at the Cambridge Experimental Women Poetry Fest, at the GAMMM reading in Rome, and for the IVY reading series in Paris.

Noah Eli Gordon is the author of six collections, including *Novel Pictorial Noise*, selected by John Ashbery for the National Poetry Series. He writes a chapbook review column for *Rain Taxi* and teaches at the University of Colorado at Denver.

Jen Hofer's recent and forthcoming publications include *lip wolf*, a translation of Laura Solórzano's *lobo de labio* (Action Books, 2007); *PUREsexSWIFTsex* and *September*, books two and three of *Dolores Dorantes* by Dolores Dorantes (Counterpath and Kenning Editions, 2007); *Sin puertas visibles: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry by Mexican Women* (University of Pittsburgh Press and Ediciones Sin Nombre, 2003); *slide rule* (subpress, 2002); *The Route*, a collaboration with Patrick Durgin (Atelos, 2008); *Laws* (Dusie Books, 2008); and a book-length series of anti-war-manifesto poems titled *one* (Palm Press, 2008). Jen is a member of the Little Fakers collective which creates and produces *Sunset Chronicles*, a neighborhood-based serial episodic drama populated entirely by hand-made marionettes inhabiting lost, abandoned and ghost spaces in Los Angeles (www.sunsetchronicles.com), and is happily a founding member of the City of Angels Ladies' Bicycle Association, also known as The Whirly Girls.

Stan Mir was raised in Rochester, NY. Currently, he lives in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. The poems appearing in this issue are from a manuscript called *The Rhino of Our Dreams*. Other selections may be read online in *Fascicle #3* and *Word For/Word #12*. His work has also appeared, or is forthcoming, in *Damn the Caesars*, *Fence*, *LVNG*, and *The Poker*.

Divya Victor has lived and learned in Seattle, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Singapore and India. Her work has appeared in *ambit: journal of poetry and poetics*, *generator*, *Xconnect*, *in/vision: forge*, and *dusie*. She is currently suturing up her previous manuscript *exuvia* and dissecting material for her next poetic project. She reads poetics and post-colonial/transnational literatures as a PhD candidate at SUNY Buffalo.

Mark Wallace is the author and editor of a number of books of poetry, fiction, and criticism. A collection of his tales, *Walking Dreams*, was published in 2007, and forthcoming in 2008 is a book of poems, *Felonies of Illusion*. He is currently Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at California State University San Marcos.