



Anomalous 7

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**Cover:** from *After Life* by Mike Edrington

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translating Anja Utler

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translating Melina Kamberić

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# carried out.

*A Course Correction*

*Kurt Beals translating Anja Utler from German*

## 1<sup>st</sup> Leaf: Here.

*.open spaces in the middle of the common fields. i've  
been wanting to speak with them.*

And when I draw, the trees reach out from their soft  
tips, branch, swarm, out from  
them and beyond, they: whip  
white in the air, some bright on  
their backs and me – I, I have  
finished and drive them out. Then stay back, dark  
for us alone, we; we have finally  
touched.

To: hold in  
falling

Their almost unbear-  
able beauty

## 2nd Leaf: Radiant Joy

*.that it would have grown into a stone.*

Me, in the bright dress, girl.

“He has fur.”

“He moves.”

“And when it gets too cold?”

“He’s a watchdog.”

“Never?”

They dress me brightly. “So people can see you in the dark.” I’m never outside in the dark.

In the afternoon I go behind the shed, all summer,  
behind the woodpile, squeeze in between the wire  
fence and the boards, into the shadows, the shed  
presses itself into my back, still scratches that evening,  
a light scent that lingers all night.

There I am, beyond the fence is  
the kennel, that’s where he’s lying.

I come as a simple stirring of  
the afternoon, I’ve been coming  
here so long, I think, we know

nothing more than me: a shaky spot, pale, a washed-  
out scraping from the mechanics of the day, like  
the unclear line of metal on the tongue, before the  
owner brings the water in the evening. Then I’d  
already slipped from the field, a faint reflection of the  
morning light that pours in every day, a cutting blade,

Like a cre-  
vice of wire  
for the stones,  
bodies, the  
dying wood.



but quickly faded by the shadows, the darkness of eye,  
fur, fades into itself.

And I, too, dive into the dense web of black, grey, and  
brown, he doesn't look at me. I turn to follow his gaze;  
stamp the ground firm with my eyes, across the few  
stones, stretch of sparse grass, it's a short way to the  
wall in front of his face. And he fades into the shack,  
the wires, with the wall in his eyes he lies calmly, a  
barely breathing rift, fur rippled as if it all overlapped,  
and nothing. Around the corner of the house, signs of  
stirring, and I'm stamped out, sprung out, a flickering  
ball, caught and flashing, this afternoon there's  
nothing I have to do there.

3

Then many years of ordinary time. I'm loose and free,  
never think of those afternoons, and rarely of that  
too-warm night: quiet behind the second-story glass,  
two streets, they cross in the flood plain, he dog criss-  
crossing them. The moon helps him rise; his back  
climbs as a line of light up to the high-voltage wires,  
shoots. These clusters of smells dance a criss-cross for  
this one nose, this one time it reaches in, stick it in  
once, rip it, mount it, piss on

it. That he doesn't cry out.

that i might see, 1st plea

For many minutes it's all too  
quiet, the overhead wires  
hum an normal night.

such – for the first time such  
stone, a black baked  
bowl and

“He had to be shot.”

the nails go to work on it,  
fast so that a  
dry

rain, rustl- from the  
 pit- p- patters so that i  
 crackle like run- so that it rushes the

air that it rakes me  
 up all the fur from the rushing  
 claws here claws it up into the

ears fills them fills  
 rustl- through the strew- the  
 muzzle – once such

rushing air such onward  
 movement in the  
 tongue the teeth too

for the eyes they stretch  
 far out  
 so that we all

far out so that  
 it lies behind now  
 almost lost, left there

the lair  
 by the muzzle what a  
 fifth arm – already it's pressed to the b-

it goes, rips all-, all the skin  
 open one more  
 tck- a

blast blend frag-  
 ments drops and air

from the sudden foreign  
 body  
 come- a last scent- it-

self? is –

But that, at least.

**fixed here**

And when I draw.

*There is nothing but white.*

Don't draw anymore; haven't thought of it for a long time. I don't do anything now.

Stand. The window. Feet on the floor, the floorboards, the windowsill under my hands, fixed, and my neck, my shoulders. Look out. On one side, rubble, the meadow, the embankment, on the other – And calls to me.

Whether she knows how she – threw me with her question, set me down; where I alone. That I wait for her; return; inevitable like the spring.

*See how things can turn,  
no – it's already your  
night now, now I tell you –  
and I have a question for  
you: because what should I –*

That's how she leaves me,  
now, with the days and the floorboards the head where something lifeless spreads and etches in, into the lips. I wait; bring my few things from before; keep them there. Like empty insect shells on the windowsill. Poke through them for remains of good larvae. Pick through all the sitting, standing, touching. Where I, myself, have taken, have spent my time.

There must be more there than white. It is frost.

*.a mosaic of needles, single leaves, several centimeters thick. the ground merges into them; they take on water, it scatters light.*

## **fixed here**

And when I write down, there are the leaves and me underneath, I'll have to write faster, since spring always comes so soon.

Quick passages, remember how the fragments come loose after a rockslide, climb on them. Stubby knuckles against the rock, what brute power from all that time; and from the shadows crushed leaves empty segments insects – what couldn't it survive? What happened?

But later in  
this fast line  
I wouldn't  
even be here.

From there, string together a few lines that can be borne. The kind that rest less heavily, not that the strength won't drain away, but maybe a looser noose. So that I can get away before she again, and this question.

(No liberating;  
binding word.)

Scatter cells. Where I can then fix my eyes. That will stick my eyes together then. On the few days before the frost falls; one day of spring, a second and three and too late –

Because actually it's easily said: I, female, 43, didn't kill anyone. I took a gun and with it I took people (a

few, female, young) away for a few hours; from the quiet rhythm of their steps, their barely unraveling time.

I wanted to bring them all; but I certainly brought at least one to the world that way. Set her on other, thinner soles – *now put your foot in the sandy flesh of that empty mine, something will stick to you it will drive through you* – and forget nothing –

Our short drive into the gravel, rocks, with our tires into the side of the crumbling mountain, dug up, eaten up, and only there: asked her to get out, one shot per tire, after a couple of sentences whispered into her suddenly raw ear: *You're bycatch, sweetie, my pretty thing* –. Her arm on my chest, head pressed against the metal, squeezed. Click; she hears it too: empty.

And by the time they found their way back into their limbs from the fear – *You can go now, you're free* – I was already a-, was one of the dark snakes, the damp arms of sand, to follow them with a light step as they safely stumbled home. To be sure that they arrived, once and for all.

To know this much – it had been enough that I could act, through the years, quick sentences and heaps of numbers, were rough, were sharp jabs, with which: I could sew together my limbs that wanted to rip apart, sew them together, and a sharp jab calls for quick action, action, forward, so that they'd hear within

them – *we, a discernible we*. Where otherwise they seemed to be made of wood made of stone or metal that mutely fell ap-.

It wasn't enough that I could stop, stop it all, falling and falling out of step, having to hold onto something so that the head wouldn't con- to walls and dam and floorboards, its emptiness behind the –. In this sudden sitting, long, and standing, how long. Until I have the nerve.

## fixed here

But the cottage is well chosen. All the way at the edge of a plot of small gardens, a train track behind; where it curves, a small mound of gravel and steel, the garden colony turns and thins out. Runs out onto a sharp point of land, a cottage; this one. Mine for these few weeks. Where the road, a residential street further down to the south, ends. And one of those fields of low hard scrub brush runs across this road towards the east and the river, runs up to the stub of a road from the north, runs into it – a certain wrong turn, a side road that lies undisturbed, listening beneath its own crust: *how near the seeping water is pressing in from the banks, how high it is rising today on the outstretched, frozen yellow stems*, grasping, churning. How deeply the crystals are already cracking.

And the fallow field runs north to a fence, just beyond that a warehouse; as long as I've been here I haven't seen a single person by that fence, by the warehouse, no one, not even walking a dog; the people stay close to their homes, to the strips of grass around the asphalt, garages, talk there too, but don't venture out onto this fallow field that ends in a small grove to the east, the usual bank growth, willows, poplars, nettles, a few alders and a lot of shrubs that I could trace but not name. And amid that the river. Fathomless nearlessness,

from right here, was able to draw a small piece of it, that was long ago, from a tiny piece of time, late February, everything else: attempts, love, nothing.

And it's very good for me to be here; carefree; I won't leave here again. The city isn't so big that many people are looking for places to sleep in the winter. In the north there are more warehouses with dumpsters, enough food thrown out every night, I already, still, want there to be less of me, and when I go there people aren't coming and going. Two or three times I went into the small city, I don't want to go again; so the days are quiet, I look, and of course the fear.

But tomorrow, when it's dark, I'll bury the gun behind the house; I won't shoot myself; in the small strip between the western wall and the railway embankment, where the ground is sandy. Sometime, someone will want to plant something there, will try, find it — *think it still works?* — pull the trigger and kill something, just as a test. I still have the knife anyway.

But clearly even that  
can't help me cut  
away the sounds;  
and so there's the  
new dread. She, of  
course, must already  
know where I am.

Like I'm blind here.

Even though I could see so well, unfold it all, take it

– she could already be standing there,  
behind me, soon an arm will wrap  
around my neck, hard – like this  
question and what should I – that  
question that even I couldn't be-  
ar, I –



apart and put it in order, from the corner of my eye,  
every movement, every bump in a layer of shadows.

And how could I have known that my eyes need the  
sound, too, that's what etches the lines into them;  
even if no one has ever hollowed out the rustling and  
cracking sounds, the rubbing of leaves and stones the  
way that she has; so that she could roll herself up in  
them, close and closer, and suddenly break out; an  
audible step, is there. Already an arm around my neck  
hard chest on my shoulder mouth pressed to my right  
ear said what she said to say; unfortunately: asked –

*And now you have time and now* *how things can turn,*  
*think; I'll come on the third day* *no – it's your night already*  
*of spring, if you know when that* *now, now I tell you –*  
*is, to get my answer.* And by the  
time I came back, she was already somewhere –

No, of course she will keep her word. It wasn't an early  
spring day yet, it's not January yet, not even December,  
and I'll observe all the days, soak up all their scents  
and put them in order, will count them. The first day  
will come, then another, and then – And until then  
I'll concentrate, stay calm, still free, throughout these  
days.

And when the gravel doesn't gleam behind the house,  
when the walls of my veins push together in the cold, I  
will help myself out. Will be restless.

## Adrenaline Memory

*Jen Zoble translating Melina Kamberić from Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian*

Sometimes my memory is like a film in slow motion. So slow that it gets stuck on a single image. Other times it's so fast that color and sound blur together. I remember the occasional odor. Of fear, the uncertainty of shivering skin. I remember the feeling, and almost nothing else.

12 I've been wandering around for days and asking if anyone remembers what he or she was doing on May 2, 1992. I ask only those who I know for sure were living in my reality. I'm not interested in the ones who can tell me about refugee housing in Zagreb. Or those whose stories begin, *When we were at war in Dubai, we almost got killed by the heat...* No... I won't ask them... I ask the ones like me who instantly were changed. Those who learned that only cold water washes out blood. Those who—though they rarely talk about it—feel their stomachs turn when they hear the crackling of fireworks. Those who know that life is not life until you smell death.

Everyone remembers. The date. The day. The hours of the day. Someone was in the basement. Someone looked at a tank through a gun sight. Someone learned that first day what it's like when someone who belongs to you dies in war.

My mother says, *How do you not remember...that day we watched the planes bombard Hum. And then Branka called from Belgrade...asked how we were. And asked whose planes...and I said to her,*

*“Well, who has the planes, Branka? The JNA.”...Branka cried then... and Piva came onto the line and said, “Yes, we know who’s doing this to you...be careful...and give my regards to Bedro.”...How come you don’t remember...And then my mother says...You see, they never spoke again, Papa and Piva. And now there’s no more Papa or Piva.*

I’m silent. I don’t remember.

I’m sitting. On my laptop screen, news footage from *Dnevnik*, the May 2, 1992 broadcast. Through the headphones I hear Senad... *Were you shot at from the tram, General?* Then the recording trails off...the trams burn in Skenderija...

I’m lying down. Eyes closed. Let’s remember what you did. Remember.

13

Dnevnik comes on. Ganić says: Alija, this isn’t about you! It’s about the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina! The state is being held captive!

Remember, girl. Slowly. What you did. Did you go to the base? Certainly. The day before that you’d become a member of the Omer Malić battalion. What did you do? Come on. Slowly. What did you eat? You must have eaten. Who did you talk to. Who did you have coffee with. Come on. Remember.

I’m lying down. Eyes closed.

The second of May, one thousand nine hundred and ninety-two. An ordinary day. Twenty-four hours. The parallel reality erased by adrenaline. Sixteen years later, lying with my eyes closed, I remember almost nothing.

Only this: that day, for the first time in my life, I lit a cigarette in front of my late father. Not in front of him. With him.

My memory is reduced to an image. His hand holding a match to the Drina cigarette between my lips.

And even then, only the outline of the image. The knowledge that after that day, after what began then, I would never be the same.



from *After Life* by Mike Edrington

# DeSoto and the Pigs

*Sandra Kolankiewicz*

16

Yes! We went up there. *Y que?! Babies*  
sucked openly, mothers showing  
themselves, the men so foolish they tossed  
back crayfish bearing eggs. How could they  
benefit from letting us see their women? We  
drove the swine through their cornstalks, the  
banks filthy where they rooted. Better to  
cover them up, best to leave a wife at home,  
silk and pearls sewed into her lace, than to  
see two years later: the rib cages, tall grasses  
between them like plumes, ulnas and femurs  
scattered, skulls open and turned toward the  
light, the few pigs that had escaped us gone  
feral, so quick our dogs couldn't catch them.

Hernando de Soto was a Spanish explorer and conquistador who died in 1542 on the banks of the Mississippi River in what is now Arkansas or Louisiana while leading the first European expedition deep into the territory of the modern-day United States. Current scholarship suggests that the pigs his group brought with them on their range throughout the southeastern United State infected the Native peoples they encountered along their journey, wiping them out.

## Box

*Karen Carcia*

Please consider forever what you have said

An artist built a box and while he was building the box—cutting the pieces of wood, fitting them together, measuring and sanding, later, nailing—he made a recording of his work. Then (probably after some time passed, and many conversations, hard work or hard luck), he put the box in a show in the Green Gallery. Inside the box, playing in loop, was the recording of the making of the box.

17

And one wonders whether, while listening to the sounds, the box was sad. Now if you're the type of person who does not believe a box could be sad, you should stop reading now—for surely your time would be better spent contemplating a book on carpentry or measuring the average height of the blades of grass on your lawn.

It may be true that the box will have a life longer than the tree it came from. That is, longer than the tree it came from if the tree was never cut down in the first place to make lumber for houses, for coffee tables, for plain, simple boxes.

Perhaps the box was sad at night when the lights of the gallery were snapped off, the doors shut, locked. Or perhaps this was the only time the box was happy in its new state—listening to the sounds of its own making, because the darkness reminded the box of the dark of the forest at night and it could even convince itself that the sound of the saw was the sound of its own leaves

rubbing against each other in the breeze which sounded nothing like the part about the hammering which didn't hurt as much as you may think—and like stitches, contained a hope of wholeness in the pain.

Some have said that the recording reveals art as mere carpentry, some have said the box is a Marxist statement, others that the recording is the box's memory. The artist said it's a way of both splitting and joining process and object. The box, of course, listens to the sounds of its own making and has had to listen to what viewers say of it. In this way, it is much like the polar bear at the zoo. Sometimes one viewer leans toward another and says, *uninspired, uninspiring*—as if the bear or the box has no way to hear this, understand it. The box, of course, has made some viewers cry and the box immediately understands these tears as tears of deep comprehension, connection and concern. I cannot tell you what you should say to the box should you come across it displayed in a room, tucked in the corner of a studio, in transit from one to the other—but I should like to advise you to whisper.



# Stereopsis

*Karen Carcia*

19

Soon the work of winter will begin. That is, the small, tough work of a man wading out into snow that covers the height of his boots to brush and scrape and prepare a way into the world, by which I mean the man will clean off a car. But now we're inside where the first thing of note that happened was my breaking a beer bottle in this man's kitchen. Who knows why my brain didn't notice that the undue force of my arm moving the full teapot from sink to stove would nick the edge of the dark brown bottle. It was morning and an accident. And, so you don't get the wrong idea, though the counter was full, it only had two beer bottles on it next to a collection of dirty dishes waiting from last night's supper, hoping to be rinsed and scraped themselves. Of course the work of winter may be something entirely different. In the case of winter, it may consider its work to be the beautiful stillness of not just forests and fields, but once-busy streets. Or perhaps it has something to do with hibernation and seed pods. Even for this man, cleaning off a car is not much work, but it leads to other work and is, for us, necessary. And perhaps the accident of force, the breaking of the bottle, is nothing, not noteworthy at all—except for the fact that I've noted it here twice. Perhaps the most noteworthy thing hasn't happened yet—the small sliver of dark brown glass that the brush and pan did not scoop up, that later will insert itself in the paw of a mouse who squeezed in to get away from the cold. And yet, this small injustice will go unnoticed by us so distracted from trying to catch to a mouse.

# Sunday School

Karen Carcia

20

In *The Beautiful Story*, Heavily Edited, we learn of skeletons that never tire; we learn stories that we cannot unfold like our fortune-telling paper cootie catchers which delight in their proclamations of *You have a secret admirer, Something you have long wished for will soon come true*; we learn of those who rejoice with loaves of bread and two cakes, and those who rejoice by releasing one prisoner and hanging another. We dream of rain on the roof of a cottage chamber bed, of a blanket of air woofed and woven. We're not sure if *scourge* is a whip or some plague, but know that both cause suffering as do questions about grammar. We learn that although *gleaning* sounds so beautiful, sounds like flowing gowns and listening intently, it has, mostly, in the telling of the Beautiful Story, to do with wheat which, although in illustration itself looks like the folds of a dress bending in a gentle breeze, means work under sun and we already know what that is like from the time we uproared about why Jesus cursed the fig tree and were told to weed St. Francis's garden which was planted but not tended by the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade CCD class. We learn how to interpret the dream in which your own heart is replaced with that of a beast of the field and we know silence before news suggests its import. We learn that even though the Beautiful Story entails famines and horrible punishment and revolt and battles and slavery and sin and sin and sin—we are supposed to be interested in the parts about the dedication of the temple and forgiveness and Jesus preaching by the seaside and when he finally turns the water into wine we've already been ourselves, corrupted a bit,

and we're looking for patterns in the heavy ornamentation of the once gilded, now faded, golden and red designs on the sides of each page and we think we see the word *Beelzebub* hidden in the scrollwork of the title page and are thinking of what type of raiment we would wear if at Halloween we could go as Esther and how it would feel to be a sheep when the angel comes to tell the shepherds that Jesus is born and how it would feel to be the water under the feet of a man who can walk on it without sinking. How it would feel to be water.

# The Arc of the Story

Karen Carcia

## I

The narrator says *Only the silence is with us*. And then the night gets a little colder. But we do not feel alone because *the silence is with us*. And there is no light, only darkness within the darkness. Imagine walking the uneven terrain. A graveyard at night. With just that blue light. The snow endlessly reflecting out. Just enough to see by, not enough to make the walking hard. Just enough to, here and there, make out the names: Vesta Mae Denrow, Emanuel Finch, Essex Miller, Holland Pike. Just enough to think about the ways we die: strung out, stung by bees, calling out to those who love us, and those who don't, or not calling out at all, just struck dumb, in awe. Just struck.

22

## II

Of course, when the narrator says that about the silence you take my hand in the dark of the theatre. We look, for an instant, at each other and then up over the rows to the screen. The light from the projection booth illuminates the tiny particles of dust we're breathing in. And out.

## III

And after the movie: life, for a moment. It's 2 a.m. and the humid night shining yellow under the streetlights of Wadsworth

Avenue. We've all wandered down to the lake and wade right in. Clothes on. A momentary relief. We all breath. For this moment before:

#### IV

The way it ends. Car wrecks, drownings, drawing in the last snow-filled breath into the silent lungs. The last luminous gliding. Stopped. Which the narrator, not having been through it, can only describe as *darkness within. Darkness.*

## Two

*Karen Carcia*

If there is such a term as the everafter then why not call this the everbefore? It is, indelibly, before what comes next. Consider this, a man is walking out of a hat store. He has no hat. He has just ordered a hat. It is new and beautiful, felt, brown because he likes the rich tone. He feels so—satisfied. Even though his wife will complain, he feels so satisfied. So what if brown doesn't match his coat—he likes it. And shouldn't there be more celebration in the world? Shouldn't he eat pancakes for dinner if he wants? Maybe he will paint the house red as his youngest wants. Who cares? Throw a party! Call the sitter! Get a tooth pulled!

- 24 This man, he has not really come out of a hat shop because how many hat shops have you ever seen? Not many. A few, perhaps, if lucky, two. This man has no hat or has a hat that is already sufficient and he is not thinking of anything except meatloaf—and although you have eaten succulent meatloaf, a swirl of meatloaf, filled with spinach or stuffing or meat, often meatloaf is nothing but dry, and sad sitting in a glass pan, placed next to canned string beans that are soggy and lukewarm. You know well this meatloaf of closets. This is the meatloaf of the hat man. And he is sad. Like mashed potatoes. Indelibly so.



from *After Life* by Mike Edrington

## from Blind Spot

*Harold Abramowitz*

### from Part One - Hotel

7.

26

The deceptions of ghosts, or not of ghosts, or not of anything at all. It was peace that sustained the war. A matter of oppositions. And in that discontinuity, that continuity, because it was reversible, he stood and watched as the other guests entered the hotel. They, the other guests, entered the hotel through the lobby. A never-ending stream. And there was home to think about as well. A thought as definite as any other. The moment he left his room. And this trouble. Really troubling thoughts. When there was something at stake, some matter of honor, or another, something specific to the war, or to war, in general, at least. It was in the room that these thoughts occurred to him, provoked him, tiny thoughts, not even the thoughts he'd intended to consider. And there was a kind of absolute silence spawned by, perhaps, a deepening sense of victory, or rather, of entitlement, and yet, there was no stage, no stage specifically, nor even a place for the guests to go and be entertained, still, they, the other guests, seemed to eat a lot.

~

In the garden. There was a seat in the garden. There were several seats beside him in the garden. It was a beautiful day. The sun was out and the birds were singing in the air. A home in the forest, so to speak. And all men require a home in the forest. At one time,



and those were, seemingly, days of greater purity, men lived in the forest. There was no violation. There was no particular code of honor that had to be followed. It was simple, really, the men, the other guests, lived in the forest for a time and then they left and continued with their lives, their businesses, their personal development, and so on.

~

27

It is in this way that the days continue. He is alone in a hotel. This is neither a break nor a vacation, not exactly. He is on assignment. He is at the hotel for a specific reason. Or he is on leave for a specific reason. In either case, he is not living his usual schedule, not performing his usual tasks and duties in their usual ways nor at their usual times. In fact, he has had to call home. His vacation has lasted longer than expected, and this, this situation, his condition, the condition he finds himself in, has already caused unimaginable problems for the world, for the world at-large. It has already caused a great deal of consternation and pain and suffering. And luck or ill luck or bad omens have had nothing to do with it. It is pain. There once was pain. He is lying in bed in his hotel room. It is a perfect night. He is high in the mountains. The air is sweet and the atmosphere is ideal. All his pain will be absorbed by the mountain air. The aroma, the simple smell, of trees, and of flowers, living flowers, and of air, clean air, will help heal him of all that ails him. It is this benefit, one among many, that the hotel offers, that the hotel is, in fact, famous for. He remembers this fact. The memory of this fact comes to him suddenly. It is something that pulls at him while he drives the car, or, rather, while he is driven in a car. The hotel he is to visit will be beneficial for him.

Then the car breaks down. There is a problem with the car and he has to pull over to the side of the road, that is, the driver has had to pull the car over to the side of the road. The car is large, but it appears to be in good condition, if a little old and not quite in the current style, or fashion. There is a pen in his hand and he is about to write a letter. He has just finished writing a postcard.

~

28

There is a certain anticipation as the car winds its way up the mountain road, a certain sense of curiosity as the car approaches the hotel. The hotel is large and laid out in a very complex way. There is a real, almost indescribable complexity to the way the hotel is laid out. And, in fact, he is not sure, at first, that he belongs in such a fashionable place, or among such exclusive company. The hotel is very elegant and very famous for its proximity to certain curative regions, specific areas that seem to cure people of what ails them. The hotel is beautiful and expensive, and the guests, generally, stay there for a very long time, often for multiple seasons. As he stands and watches the other guests enter the hotel, he is aware of how easily they are accommodated. How easily the hotel, in its massive size and complexity, is able to absorb them, other guests who arrive in a never-ending stream, and then no sooner seem to disappear. This is the miracle of the hotel. Of all hotels? Of this hotel in particular. It is part of its mystery and fascination and charm. This information, of course, pertains to the old hotel, to the one that burned to the ground. Still, there is a question of trouble. Specifically, the trouble of blocking out certain stimuli. And the question becomes the hotel itself, or, rather, it becomes a game he plays in the hotel. He is standing in the hall.

He is standing next to a small table in the hall. There is a vase filled with flowers on the table. He is at his seat in the bar, the seat from which he is able to observe the lobby and the grand staircase. He is outside the lounge. He is in the lounge. He is in his room. He is eavesdropping on the guests in the room next to his. There is, of course, a form for all this, an unspoken language, and an unguessed at consequence. And this consequence, of course, depends on his actions, on how, and in what manner, he will choose to carry himself. And this line of thinking inevitably leads to his next decision. The spontaneous decision that will propel events to their conclusion. It is already a conclusion of sorts that has just occurred. This meandering of his. This standing around on the periphery of the hotel. He is standing in the hall, and this, too, has its consequences. A change that takes place unexpectedly. A rapid deployment of his qualities of service. There is, of course, much more to be said. And it, also inevitably, will be said at some point. But here it suffices to become the picture, the display, so to speak, of a kind and gentle turn of events. Of a barely spoken of purpose, of points of fact, and then of their contraries. What occurs is occasional.

~

There is a peculiar resistance on his part to contact, to unexpected social contact, especially. And despite the weather, the weather had been nice, and despite the unseasonable and difficult weather, it is really the season that he finds himself responding to. That and particular voices. Not so much their content but the quality, timbre, of the speech itself. And this causes something to change within him. A change of perspective that can only be character-

ized by its utter lack of perspective, or of joy, or of any other quality, positive or negative, that he can imagine. It just is what it is and there is no telling what form it will take from one moment to the next. Essentially, it is in his power to make mistakes, it is his right to have come to his place in spite of his intention, of his clear intention.

### from Part Two - Funeral

#### 3.

30

There were icons in the backyard. Not really icons, but things, objects, a collection of some sort, things, icons, really. And the sight of it, that collection of objects, those things, objects, icons, really, reminded him of death. It was late one night, really, it was night and he was tired, but he didn't go to sleep. The idea of food bothered him, attracted him, and bothered him. He'd eaten in a restaurant, had, earlier that night, eaten alone in a restaurant. And the things, the collection of objects, the icons, the plants and trees and flowers, in the backyard, and on the streets, everywhere, all of it, those things, reminded him of death.

~

There was a dog on the street. The dog was running down the street. The dog did not appear to be in distress in any way, yet, still, there was something about the sight of the dog that bothered him.

~

It was a large event, an occasion, a funeral. And there were many friends, associates, and relatives, and others, other people, who stood in the open air that day. There was the sound of the eulogy and the sound of the prayers. The sound of crying. A body was being buried, interned. It was a solemn occasion, a funeral, an event that had required planning.

~

31

There had been the threat of death for years, even the threat of death, specifically, on certain occasions. And there was something in his eye, something small, an object, something foreign, some foreign matter in his eye that, from time to time, bothered him.

~

The sad part was that it was not a significant event. The funeral, in fact, was not a significant event at all.

~

And still there was a question of waiting. There was waiting to be done, always plenty of waiting to be done. He'd waited for her by the door of the café. On another occasion he'd waited for her on the street. On still another occasion he'd sat and waited for her at a table in the restaurant. And, then, in those days, he was usually on time, or, often, early, when he'd had an arrangement to meet with someone.

~

The icons, the things, the collection of objects, the things, icons, really, in the backyard reminded him of death. It had been months, or years, it had been long, had been a long time, since he'd been in that neighborhood, in that part of the city, in the backyard, at night. And there was more, there was, of course, much more to say about the situation, about all the situations he found himself in, but there was something in the way. A truck or car, or bus, something, a vehicle of some sort, was blocking his way. He was standing in the middle of the street, waving, gesturing, wildly, somewhat wildly, humiliatingly, in a way, doing a kind of dance, almost a dance, trying to catch their attention, but there was something in the way.

32

~

They, his friends, associates, enter the café through the front door. The door that faces the street.

~

The day he'd waited for her had turned out badly. It was bad, a bad day. Yet it was a day, a period of time, that he knew, somehow, just knew, understood, to be significant. In fact, he'd been aware that it, the day, the days, those days, in general, meant something, still he couldn't see anyway of going back, of returning, to where he'd been before. Things seemed to get worse after that, though he'd expected, had, of course, expected things to get better.

~

He was waiting for her in the café, or restaurant. It was late one night, and he was tired. And, at that point, anyone would have been tired. Still, there was no way of avoiding it. This fact. The signs. There was an open door, a green, or red, door. He walked through the open door and into a great room. The room was filled with light. It was filled with the most beautiful light he had ever seen. And there had to be something to fill the days. There had to be some miracle in the works, something. Something good was about to happen. He just knew it. Or, the way he looked as he stood, standing.

~

33

And there are strict rules, laws, directives, strict prohibitions, governing the handling of human remains. There were complications, however. Things happened unexpectedly. And the complications appeared, or things changed, literally, over night.

~

He could see his friends, associates, turn the corner and approach the front door of the café. He waved, gestured, wildly, somewhat wildly, humiliatingly, in a way, did a kind of dance, almost a dance, trying to get their attention.

~

There were icons, things, objects, a collection of some sort, things, icons, really, all around the backyard. It was night, and dark, and

there was very little wind. He was visiting a neighborhood, a part of the city. It was dark, very dark, much darker than he was accustomed to. He was standing in the backyard and there were various objects, icons, things, a collection of some sort, things, icons, really, hanging from beams, and from walls, and on the ground: wind chimes and small statues, a stone turtle, and other things, objects, icons, really.

~

His friends, associates, sat at a table in the cafe. And the café was very beautiful, at that point. Still, there was something wrong, or there was something missing. There was the feeling, generally, generally speaking, that there was something wrong, that something was, in fact, missing, or even stolen, perhaps.

34

~

He sat and looked out the café window. He sat for a long time and stared out the front window of the café, the one that faced the sidewalk and the street.

~

And it was not long after that. The funeral.

~

It was early, or late, and it was time for him to go. He had to leave his place. He left his place early, or late, or it could have been at night, or in the evening. He went to work. He was on his way to do his job. And, on that day, things were indeed bound to change.



Yet, still, at that point, there was time. There was still time. He had time, then, at that point. Time to spare. He bought stamps, and stamped a letter, and put the letter in a mailbox. And then he'd gone to work, had gone to do his job. It was later that day. It was after work. And there were stamps in his wallet. He'd intended to take the stamps out of his wallet and put them away in a drawer. Yet each time he'd opened the drawer, opened his wallet. And that day had been a surprise. It was so unpredictable. The ways the day, any day, could possibly go. There was a collision, of sorts, a violent collision, on the street outside the café. And earlier that day, he'd waited for her on the street.

~

He sat in the café, or restaurant, and waited.

35

~

And there were others at the funeral, others, observers, recorders, if you will. And then there was the sound of glass breaking. The sound, somewhere, off in the distance, perhaps, of glass breaking.

~

The icons, the things, the collection of objects, the things, icons, really, in the backyard were made of wood and metal, mostly, or mostly made of wood and stone, or mostly made of plastic, or made of plastic and wood and metal and stone, and even ceramic and some glass. And there was no denying that something significant had happened, that, indeed, something had changed. He bought stamps in the morning on his way to work.

~

In the meantime, there were arrangements, preparations, to be made. It was a solemn occasion, a funeral, an event that had required planning.

~

There was a dog on the street. There was a dog running down the street, and the dog was not in distress, or did not appear to be in distress, in any way. The dog ran up the street, seemingly carefree, in, seemingly, a carefree manner, yet, still, there was something sad in the way the dog ran. To him, there was a sadness, a real and profound sadness, in the way the dog ran up street. Yet, he was not, typically, one to feel sentimental over animals. He had no particular appreciation for animals, had never really paid that much attention to animals. There was a room, and he tried to see what the room looked like. There was a bed in the room, and a chair, and bookcases. Most likely, the room he slept in. The room where he spent his time. He feels that the most likely answer is that he had happened upon the room where he slept. The room where he spent his time. It was difficult to see in the dark, however. But after staring at the room for a while, he was sure that it was the place. Still, at one time, he feels, the room might have been slightly different, maybe painted a different color. Or there might have been different furniture.

# Grüß vom Krampus

*Joshua Daniel Edwin*

My home is a walk-in snuffbox heaped  
in Alpine tumble-snow. My fame  
has made life easy: now I melt in among  
my brash pretenders. At Christmastime,  
so many crabby widowed men in masks  
lope like drunken wolves through half-lit  
birch-whipped squares, I am dismissed  
as a relic of dusked superstition.

37

A stopped pocket-watch means someone's died.  
No one sees me tail the night parade, counting  
children with my hooded bookish gaze.  
They let their window locks grow soft.

My uncanny friend, the wind, elides  
my hoofprints from the snow-bright lawns.

# In the Garden of Earthly Delights

*After Bosch*

*Joshua Daniel Edwin*

Your reward is freedom:

you can cannibal  
cleave off ears  
whittle with your brothers  
eat long pig.

String up the brunette:

outstretch his ecstasy of arms  
tight as harpwires  
rake his stave of ribs  
stuff the apple in his mouth.

Shelter? In the whale-oil lantern.

Mortal sins punch your ticket here  
welcome to my fiefdom  
as pride predicates a fall  
your will prepares my meals.

## During my Reign

*Joshua Daniel Edwin*

I balanced the palace like a grape in my palm.  
I kept hounds and lions chained to my raised  
and valanced bed – what use had I for fear.

The golden honeybee, my heraldic charge,  
graced my nightgown, which I wore all day  
whenever I saw fit. Traveling, I perched in a violet

velvet-lined sedan, securely belted, my passing  
grumps and hungers palliated with fresh apples,  
the finest grains and cereals, all bagged and dusted

39 with ground cinnamon, which was kept close at hand.  
Do you understand? I was the genius of this shore,  
the whole ‘spanse of sea-blue carpet, from the sofa

to the small boudoir. I was the lone taproot to the verve  
that kept this great house thrumming: the piety  
of parents and child. Now children. Now divided.



from *After Life* by Mike Edrington

# Menard's Alexander Blok

*Russell Scott Valentino*

## Editor's Foreword

Having relocated from Nîmes to Bexley, a region of Greater London that would be officially designated a borough of the city in 1965, it is known that Pierre Menard, notorious for his hitherto unsurpassed, if fragmentary, translation of the Quixote, took up the perfection of his Russian, abandoned since approximately twelve years before. In one of his surviving notebooks from this period, he complains—among other things, including of the wretched quality of the water and the even more wretched quality of the weather—that it was slow going at first without his beloved dictionaries and a certain un-named grammar that he had apparently picked up second-hand at the central market in Arles in the summer of 1913. Nevertheless, gifted and diligent as he was, after several months of intensive work, he turned his attention to the translation of poetry.

Here below, several examples of his manner of work, characteristically—for those familiar with his previous output—a progression of sorts. These translations, if they can in fact be called that without too offensively stretching the term's historical usage, have as their source, the well-known title-less lyric of Aleksandr Blok (1880-1921) that begins "*Devushka pela v tserkovnom khore*" ("A Girl Sang in a Church Choir").

That he translated into English with some dexterity should not be surprising, given his background on his mother's side and the

fact of his relocation, albeit temporarily, to England. Of particular note is the palimpsest quality of the final version, which contains hints and scratches of Blok's original, though with the subtle alterations familiar from his life-long, if largely hidden, work on the Quixote. I hope in the coming months to bring to light Menard's equally instructive versions of Velimir Khlebnikov, Marina Tsvetaeva, Osip Mandelshtam, and others.

—RSV

### **Menard's Blok: Version 1**

42

A girl sang in a church choir  
Of those grown tired in foreign lands,  
Of ships sailed off to sea,  
Of those who have forgotten joy.  
So sang her voice, flying to the cupola,  
And the light shone on her white shoulder,  
And each looked and listened from the gloom,  
As the white dress sang in the light.

To all it seemed there would be joy,  
That all the ships in peaceful bays  
And all the tired folk in foreign lands  
Would find a bright and shining life.

And the voice was sweet, the light was thin,  
And only high up in the heavenly gates,  
Attached to mysteries, a small child wept  
That no one would come back.



## Menard's Blok: Version 2

A young girl was singing in a choir  
Of all the tired people in strange lands,  
Of all the ships sailed out to sea,  
Of all those who've forgotten their joy.  
Her voice sang, flying up in the dome,  
And the light flickered on the white shoulder,  
And each looked and listened from the gloom,  
The white dress singing in the light.

And to all it seemed that joy would arrive,  
With all the ships in a peaceful bay,  
And all the tired people in lands far away  
would find themselves a shining life.

43

The voice was sweet and the light slender,  
And only far up at the kingly doors,  
Appended to secrets, a child was weeping  
That no one would ever come more.

## Menard's Blok: Version 3

Devushka singing in a church chorus  
Of tired strangers in a stranger land,  
Of all the vessels in the sea's forest,  
Of souls forgetting all the joys of man.

So sang Devushka, the notes rising taut,  
The lights shining through, shoulders gleaming white,

Everyone looking and listening fraught,  
As the white dress held a note in the light.

And joyous appeared in everyone's eyes  
The vessels, the ships, safe in quiet bays,  
And the people, too, under foreign skies,  
Having found their bright, their bright shining way.

Devushka's voice sweet, shining light slender,  
And only high up at the kingly doors,  
A little child wept, to secrets tendered,  
That of them all none would come back anymore.

#### Menard's Blok: Version 4

44

Девушка sang in *tserkóvnom* chorus  
Of tired *lyúdi* in *chuzhóm krayú*,  
Of all *korablí* sailed off to sea,  
O *fsyékh*, forgetting *rádost' svoyú*.

Так *pyél* her *gólos*, the notes rising up,  
*I lúch* shining through, on the white *pleché*,  
And each *iz* the *mráka* looked and *slúshal*,  
Как *béloye plátýe* sang in *luché*.

And to *vsyé* it seemed that *rádost' búdet*,  
*Chto* in safe havens *fsyé korablí*,  
*Chto na chuzhbíne* the tired out *lyúdi*,  
Had their *svyétluyu zhízn' obrelí*.

The voice was *sládok*, shining light *tónok*,  
And *tól'ko* high up at the kingly *vrat*,  
*Prichástnyi* to secrets, wept *rebyónok*,  
*Chto* no one *ne pridyót nazád*.

### Menard's Blok: Version 5

Девушка пела в церковном хоре,  
О всех усталых в чужом краю,  
О всех кораблях, ушедших в море,  
О всех, забывших радость свою.

Так пел её голос, летящий в купол,  
И луч сиял на белом плече,  
И каждый из мрака смотрел и слушал,  
Как белое платье пела в луче.

И всем казалось, что радость будет,  
Что в тихой заводи все корабли,  
Что на чужбине усталые люди  
Светлую жизнь себе обрели.

И голос был сладок, и луч был тонок,  
И только высоко, у царских врат,  
Причастный тайнам плакал ребёнок,  
О том, что никто не придёт назад.

# HOW WE STAYED TOGETHER: A GRAPHIC FLASH

BY ELIZABETH CATANESE

WE LOST EACH  
OTHER AT 9 A.M.

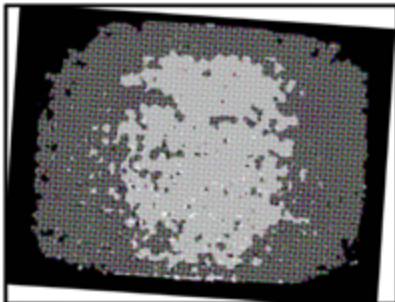
THE PHONE RANG  
AND YOU SAID...

"MY PURPLE HAIR  
TIE IS LOST  
SOMEWHERE  
BETWEEN YOUR  
SHEET AND YOUR  
BEDSPREAD."

I SAID: "I'LL LOOK FOR  
IT."

THEN I IMAGINED YOUR HAIR  
UNMOORED, LOOSE AROUND YOUR  
NECK.

I TURNED ON THE  
TELEVISION AND TRIED  
TO READ THROUGH THE  
FUZZ.



A MAN WAS ADVERTISING  
AN EXERCISE MACHINE  
THAT TURNED THE  
WOMAN MODELING ON A  
DIAGONAL UNTIL THE  
BLOOD RUSHED TO HER  
HEAD.



I GOT TIRED OF WATCHING AND  
DOVE LIKE A CRAZY PERSON  
INTO THE SHEETS HEAD FIRST.

I FOUND YOUR HAIR  
TIE

I FOUND YOUR HAIR  
TIE



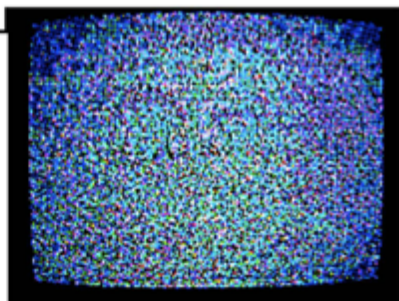
I DROVE TO YOU

AND RETURNED YOUR  
HAIR TIE

THE NEXT NIGHT

YOU LEFT YOUR GLASSES,  
THE NEXT NIGHT YOU LEFT

YOUR LAPTOP



36 CENTS

LATER

A KEY

THEN A BOOK ABOUT  
TRAVEL

UNDERWEAR

A LOCK

A BLACK LEATHER PURSE

AFTER THAT

A CELL PHONE

I DROVE  
EACH  
OBJECT  
BACK.

I WOULD NOT LET YOU BUY A NEW  
VERSION OF SOMETHING I COULD

RETURN TO YOU SO EASILY

from Junk Movements

Nalini Abhiraman

BLUE RASPBERRY

*Who says you can't find a wholesome snack on the go? Mixed Berry Fruit Crisps are made with real fruit wrapped in a sweet and crispy snack bar that's only 110 calories. Also, try Apple Cinnamon.*

This way, it can't be helped. She likes to think about it in this way exactly; the aggregate of his absences, the sweet sum of events and situations he had forsworn, would have made an ideal father. A wholesome golem of presentness, of being there. Of being, of there.

48

Hard to say why the emergency sprinkler brings her back to this course of thought. Tinky thing, embedded in the ceiling's porous institutional plaster. And rusting with leisurely calm. It crisps there, russet as an apple. Elbow 1, propped behind Head 1, keeps it in her line of sight (Eye 1, Eye 2). Whereas Elbow 2 is useless in the meantime, securely wrapped and gowned, pinned under Ribs A1-A12.

She turns Head 1 to ease the waiting, Neck 1 panging only lightly in protest. Here are some things to read. That's something. Some specifications:

COLOR	BLUE
LATEX FREE	YES
SIZE OUNCES	8.5 OZ, 110

An unknown microscopic quantity of blue, latex-free ounces is ghosting on Breast 2, evaporating from it. A cinnamon-brown hump. Imperceptible blue mist carried up from it to go find the ceiling, the crispy sprinkler. The energy of its dissipation is borne through the door as calories.

Perhaps the evil little thing isn't exactly where she has testified. Perhaps it is a little more to the left, or the right. Below and above. The bar passes over here and also over there. Breast 2, coated in blue. A nurse attached to the end of the bar purses everything on her face that can be pursed, then leaves. Earlier, the same nurse says, *But my God, you really are just a baby*, tugging at the clipboard. She smells of a fruit splash, of the idea of mixed berry made real. She is kind and unsexed by her beryl scrubs. She is a blue raspberry, a beaker carrying tubes of fruit between machines that snack and snack and try until there is a condition to find.

Earlier, in the waiting room, with its chairs of jointed cherry wood and blunt pink damask, the receptionist says, *My god, you're just a baby*.

Says, *Isn't she just a baby?* to the nurse.

*Who?* says the nurse. Later, the nurse whispers to the doctor, *She's just a baby*. By these rules, the doctor is also a baby. They stand in the hallway, looking out at the waiting room, where there are women sitting on every surface, but no babies. Women cluster in packs near the closet full of gowns. Women sit on the worn pink chairs and watch The View.

The doctor, whom no one notices is a baby, does not know that waiting rooms have always looked like this, tacky and neoclassical. Modernity has cycled through them and been found wanting. Modernity is in useful hiding. It loops through the machines as they grind and pulp and sign their fruited reflections. This is what everyone, women and babies and doctors and nurses, is waiting for. We build neoclassical rooms to furnish its honor. The reflection signature reveals the medium, when it chooses to do so. Unlike a baby's wail, it is beyond the naked ear to discern.

## POCKET

50

*Warm, pillowy flatbread filled with seasoned ground beef, warm nacho cheese sauce, crisp shredded lettuce, and diced ripe tomatoes. You can also upgrade this item with marinated and grilled all-white-meat chicken or authentic carne asada steak.*

All the birds roost at The Back Fence Bar. Pillowy ripe hens, snowy in the face. Coo at you like you're a chicken egg. All-white-meat legs, warm as cheese. Cased in dark seamed stockings, looking grilled. Marked. For those not seasoned in husbandry, here's a ground rule. Beef up your You. Make it look authentic. Marinated man, machismo dolloped on you like nacho sauce. Walk into the pub like a rubber monster, highballs rippling on the table. Steak looked at you from its warm plate and shredded itself, you'll tell all your grandbabies. No need for this fork and knife but they placed them there anyway, as a courtesy. Or how's that old jawn go? When you eat, it is the food that is scared. Big googly eyes looking nervous in your patty, peering out from underneath a seeded roll, a crisp



frill of lettuce. French fries crying out in their bunched condition, bloodied with sauce. Down they go into your filled stomach, past your gulping neck, the telltale blink of your Adam's apple. Also, a shower of diced tomatoes, when it's *carne asada* night.

In Bollywood flicks there's a thing. Called an 'item number.' Girl heretofore unintroduced gets up in spangles and a bare navel, Cleopatra eyes, with all her suggestions uncovered, then shakes her thing for a song. She's only allowed playback lyrics in a can for a voice, and in a husky alto at that. It's a difficult thing. Glittery silo. Hard to upgrade to real acting from there. Wrap a wet sari around yourself and try again. For men, there's flatbread to provide cover for reinvention. Sure, bread rises softly in its bowl, is a contained lively dome. But they don't call it the staff of life for nothing. Should call it the shaft of life. So cut dough into sticks and get them hard. Spear whichever biscuits you can. It's your barrel.

51

## TRIPLE AND ONE ZERO NO

*Triple Chocolate Decadent Cake includes a pouch with real chocolate chunks and rich fudge so you can bake an over-the-top cake, all with one box. Contains zero trans fats and no hydrogenated oils.*

*And* always means *two*, and *always* means *two*. *Two* always means two things, *and* and *always*. This is the Transitive Property and is something you can always learn in elementary school, if you attend Cake Eater Elementary, where my sons are schooled in the extortionate entitlement of early childhood, with its ceaseless re-

plenishment of decadent supplies; its over-the-top pencil-pouches loomed and silkscreened by giant captive machines, squealing and coughing out zippered neon panoramas of the cartoon-bear pantheon, perfect products bound for scuff and smear and doom. My sons leave hydrogenated chocolate drops in all their pouches' corners, leave them to bake at room temperature. The drops lose their structural integrity. They slump softly into unwashable turds. This is to say nothing of the pencils themselves, plucked by the bunched fistful from their box of manufacture, destined to rot, point-first, in crusted fudge. The wood of them grows waxy with oils, turning dark and rich as the chocolate and trans fats of their ruin.

52

In the wake of such treatment, a pencil cannot sharpen properly. Whether twisted and turned in the barrel of a planetary parer, or jammed into an electric advancement of the same, the wood falls from the graphite in moistened chunks, as if grown soft and real as a cake. And what of an eraser, feckless pink thing, one each to a pouch? No small human hand contains the faultless parallelograms of them. In lieu, my sons rub the buttery ends of their destroyed pencils over their mistakes, razing nothing, but drawing much attention to the backwards Bs, the sinking Ps caught in steerage between an upper- and lower case. The greasy mist makes a grisaille of each ditto sheet. Triple-zero word score.

And yet. *Great effort!* bugles the scented emblazon affixed to both homeworks. Effort is the move. Move we do. To the car, the store, the aisle, the pouches. To the register and the door, which includes a sensor that rewards us for the effort of walking up to it, and slides open noiselessly, so as to let us out into the open air.

## Sign

*James D'Agostino*

Each day four pounds of sunlight  
fall on the earth. Make a few  
calls. Try for an ounce, but

whatever. Early morning  
ants shine two-way traffic back,  
sweet with found rot, and out, and in

between teach each other further  
farther sugars. Here's the name  
of the city. Put it in your mouth.

53

Girl with a bag of letters ladders  
up to the Englert marquee barefoot  
and takes out an M. Like the alphabet

the first ideas for women's shoes  
were birds. Lately waves of geese  
at night look white, underlit with

streetlight. Of course, it could've  
been a W. Make what make what  
make what you want of this.

# To Code Means We Have to Cut Skylights

*James D'Agostino*

Here in the mile-wide swath  
pinched in between don't hurt

bad and don't feel too good,  
either A) the heart's a bowling  
alley and I'm just another guy

with four shoes or I don't  
even want to think about B).

54

What do you call that?  
It's just Tuesday. 7:50 or so  
the sun solders its arc up

above the oaks so it's squint  
city. It's writing with my eyes

closed. It's fine. I can't see  
a thing in these sheets. Girls  
sip by, scissors dripping

sunlit sorghum. But it's okay.  
Be and seem seem to have

worked all that out. Dragon  
flown, sun burnt, heat simmers  
birds to speak monkey. A street

singer strings her trellis of trouble  
and peace. I figure all I've got

to do is describe every face  
and then we'll all be in here.  
Watch your head.

# If We Lived Our Lives Like Songs

*James D'Agostino*

I'd drink strangely  
and much and most  
of the night until frost  
on my windshield's a dust

of finely grated streetlight,  
spilled talc of zinc and moon  
and one long walk home.  
And right about the time

56

why shoots way out ahead of how  
I feel, I will say no more of this,  
though very much else. Like I like  
my blues with more green

than yellow, too. I like cuckoo,  
I go ape. I've owned many kites  
and flown only most of them.  
How long have I had to get

out of here? We're talking ten  
or twelve minutes until the sun  
goes purple blow torch cooled  
to scrap grade daylight.

We're talking breakfast. That red  
freckle of storm on Jupiter has  
spun for 300 years, roughly since  
Rousseau wrote the one  
rule of education's not to save  
time, but squander it. Know  
about this. Due to weather  
class is canceled.



from *After Life* by Mike Edrington



## apparent story i

*Brandon Holmquest translating Gastón Fernández from the Spanish*

there are palm trees in the hotel dining room in Río. Midday, he's just arrived. Three on each broad side of the table, one of them him, one on each end. There are eight of us. I don't like palm trees.

Do you like the music?

.....

59

Sometimes, once in a while, I feel like nothing's happened. Eyes closed, a feeling as of floating, or having already floated in the shadows and being sure of having known caverns in the air. There's a photographic machine on the Colombian's bed, he's a kid they say, do we get to see him...? known dark caverns in the air. Waiting on Hugo who has his back turned, wearing a thin, white shirt and a dark sweater with buttons and his eyes are large, black and sad very quickly, I haven't paid attention to him. In Río I think I see a last image, a photographic machine on the bed, remembering the wooden castle in Prague we'll invade at year's end or the fogged photos that I'll take in Bruges (I dropped it many times and he laughed) Do you like the music?.....

.....We thought it was a three-storey house in Place Ladeuze, I was killing mosquitos, where we lived above him there after all these staircases and then me more distant but I came back every morning to see him and we saw each other and we talked and we extended to one another the black hand of Christophe. Christ

up there with his arms extended. Up. There's an eternal, mutual silence, penetrating and grave on the road downhill and we sat down at four in the afternoon to have spaghetti in tomato sauce for lunch, he doesn't eat, he says he doesn't eat he says that to me, and watches me eat. Hugo. There are three hands, the soil and sap of three pink flowers, on a bus, with muddy shoes and initials on a board. We went into the Musée d'Art and came out laughing with Henriette, not Charlotte, and we go on laughing in front of a little sideways painting by dead Manolo, Betty Boops, it seems like we can hear music at five and we cross Africa reading informative bulletins, then nothing, nothing. We're in the belly of the white whale and we went up to a three-storey house to extend the black hand of Christophe. There's Christ with his arms extended, up there, and there are three hands, the soil and sap of three pink flowers on a bus...Place Ledeuze, we're in a three-storey house. Jean Kott, le Figaro Littéraire. Christophe is here. Hugo's portable radio and the grain of his face, les inscriptions.

Then we began to live deeply.

"Wear the black one, it looks better and it's more restrained." I realized he was listening to me. He didn't know I was listening to him. Every day, the slow, rhythmic brushing of the black cloth on his arm against the black cloth on his hip told me that he'd already come, three soft blows, spaced out, one day I didn't want to open but I opened, it was a just before the return and after Prague and he had seen the light under my door. We looked at the toothless girl from the patisserie, once in a while we directed our eyes and steps toward the poor cavern behind her closed lips. I think she loved us in silence and without asking herself why, and we saluted

Blanca of the dirty mouth. One day, when the afternoon's leaden gray and the smooth song of the winds began, toasted leaves fell from behind windows and formed beds. Then water fell and formed puddles; and the winds ran and formed fugitive strands of hair. We ate and drank of them in silence. We also ate meat and drank colored milks in silence. I think everyone loved without knowing where. He read to me sometimes, like parents, to put their children to sleep, tell them enchanted stories and I listened, as if from far away, "Río is behind me." I feel it run over my kidneys and how I bind them with their flowing, rigid chain of lead, inviting me to the slow voyage of death, like all of you...beings...One night, while we slept, snow soundlessly fell and formed a white lawn for the first time. Saturday the 12<sup>th</sup> of February the sun came up at five. It hasn't snowed since Sunday in Ottignies. He didn't know what I did that Sunday, after a Saturday of classes (at eight in the morning it had snowed lightly all night for the first time). G F on the roofs of all the slumbering cars, on all the sleeping windshields and windows, memories of a childhood had in fragments. Important happenings: not a soul in Ottignies; waiting to run into some damsel in distress; slow, silent march; something similar to a forest or a private estate, a castle among the trees, a sharp silence, a scream, a rifle, a shot, blood on my back, then nothing; in la Gare, waiting for the train, distracted reading, sudden and subconscious remembering of the time, the train in front of me, paper and pencil. All in four hours with light snow for the first time. He'd be sleeping at this hour, white over a white sheet and under a white sheet, a dark brown ruana at his feet. And a jumble of books, Kandinsky to the left, Brueghel to the right, clean sheets for twenty-five francs. Saturday the 12<sup>th</sup> of February the sun came

up at five. It hasn't snowed since Sunday in Ottignies. Saturday the 12<sup>th</sup> of February the sun came up at five I tell you. It hasn't snowed since Sunday in Ottignies. Saturday the 12<sup>th</sup> of February the sun came up at five. It hasn't snowed since Sunday in Ottignies. It snowed a lot. And it fell over our white shoulders and wept, while she wrote her first letter on a thick white envelope (tu sais, vraiment je t'aime). It snowed a lot.

I wonder if this developed on the surface, since it seemed that we'd let ourselves fall soundlessly into an endless, dark, slow depth like a ship in the night that moves smoothly and without speaking. We fell with our bodies weightless. That night, the lights on the tables went out and two Egyptian handclaps brought forth six slaves carrying illuminated golden fountains, who came in through sideways doors to feed the hungry, quench the thirsty, clothe the naked. Endless, dark, slow, do you hear music at five, undefined, lukewarm...?

Falling into endless depths, without memory, dark, slow, it seems at some moment the night's velocity and wind moistened his eyes. Music was heard at five, imperceptible, vague, ethereal, made of long phrases that repeated and ended making a strange and mysterious alliance with the density of our temples and the silent murmur of the air. He smoked. Music was heard at five, a fantasia. I think we had listened to it before some place. I don't remember where. Maybe in my house, two years later. It was the same feeling of calm, a neutral hour, weightlessness, (we wore shorts on account of the heat, those shorts we thought were bathing suits, white socks and slippers, we were enormously bored. One slept in dark glasses. Took notes). The air was heavy, and there was a

long corridor that ended in the little dining room and on the side a door that opened on the big dining room; first they told us tie required but we went without ties, they rang golden, vertical bells whose sound continued in the air a while and then disappeared, then we got up slowly and we ate, we never went in the bar, I sat with Marie-Ange who taught me to draw dogs with no tails. Then her mother appeared and she disappeared with her. I remember it was the first time I was able to converse with someone seriously. She was very beautiful. I think once she called me by my name and once the night wind moistened my eyes. Then nothing. It must have been six years ago.

We also thought of writing a book. The Anthology of Smell. It expanded slowly in streets and armpits, in dining rooms, slowly, and cinemas, slipped through windows, eyes, doorjambs, invaded salons and souls, trains, and raised itself in holocaust to the skies, where birds slumber. It passed beside us and lived with us. We never thought our laughter would die so cruelly, cut off by the snow. Then we visited empty Chinese exhibitions where Kang-Mei, daughter of Ho, awaited us, and she never ceased to teach us how to unmask men. Then we talked. We talked. We talked. And we listened to the bored bells at the Library fall and roll, and we drank ink noon and night, and we did nothing but begin, every day, to live deeply. I traveled. I traveled with a black umbrella. I talked to him. I knew the languages of Babel, the towers and arches, the plazas, the fields, four Vikings, temples and seas, night during day and women smoking pipes; I also made friends on the train with an Englishman and a dog who licked imaginary wounds from my left hand, the most beautiful one I have. Sitting on a colorless sofa, a blond hair brushed my thigh with modest audac-

ity, and we drank silence and hot spiced wine in the shadows. I met Noel in Paris and further on graves under a white lawn, I saw Brueghel and Bach as children, and I spoke to her at length while crossing the park, in a hurry, remembering parties that we by no means wanted to remember, when she shone with the brilliance in her eyes and I was holy. Do you remember me? My name is Somnus, son of anguish and memory, grandson of life. The old man who invited us to share his lonely table said this to Christiane and I, in Prague, a little later, New Year's night. He had a pink piglet in his arms that he had to touch to live. He said nothing more since he left us alone though he didn't move from his place. Christiane bit her nails and wore a pink sweater, and died a little every day. She didn't speak, and the day she died most was that night the train took us to Prague, all standing, very close together in the long corridor, all standing, very close together. No one spoke. He didn't speak. There were no free compartments, Guy no longer served for our jokes, maybe we were sitting or standing on him without realizing it. Nicole. As the sun came up, we found free compartments, their occupants disappeared like invisible gnomes in the night's cold. Hugo was chosen King. When we got off in Leuven there was autumn sun in January and we carried Modigliani under a black umbrella.

(I always think I remember that we walked in the yellow, phantasmagoric clarity of the streets at night, and that our faces turned pale (like theatrical masks, like the paleness of coming death) and that we went to the Vita. I think one night I seemed to stay behind while he spoke with her, it was the month of January, I seemed to end the night on the summit of some white rocks in the park, listening, whistles below, on the road. Veiled by the waters, my eyes

seemed to hear that we always get an F for effort and we spend whole centuries in Marienbad. Then we come back to Earth, which rejects us, and we suffer much without knowing where. It says to us, from far away, “Vous etes, comme une ombre, et vous attendez, que je m’approche...” It was only later that we died.

Lima, october 1968

To Eduardo López Jaramillo

# The Money Shot

*Ricardo Maldonado*

persists as penalty asked for, as case of oneself to another is  
resurrected with coffee,

except he blessed day break and he has seen my face fear the end  
because he prayed  
it wouldn't

be safe to place a name for it, when the Marlboros were tossed  
because they implicated  
expiration at year's end,

66 because he neglected the access select/start and the boroughs  
exist

if marked by limit—if there is limit—if he would comprehend  
there was much to endorse  
inside the walk-up, when I read without mercy.

Must be every city exists if the limit could tame the earth, if the  
limit could fail but breed  
excuses to ensure a kind of heresy and be more of a result of  
meaning

when he walked to the door, without mystery.



At least we could refuse the name because we made residence  
and means  
to wait, because the express left and the first penalty, at eleven,  
was called our exile.

## For Love

*Ricardo Maldonado*

Already there appears a pattern of disorder on the floor, myths  
of impenitence and speculation that every x is reason for the  
Vodka and a bag of peanuts,

is wont yet to relinquish when we approached with navy  
slacks and metaphysics  
and invested that 30s talkie with Vodka.

Quoth vices and the stewards, quoth tomorrow's Alka-Seltzer:

"we walked to the lavatory for self-examination and discreet  
shampooing."

68 Sleet on tarmacs and the concourse cancels out my sense of  
others with a second round.

Three thirty-three seems compelling, if a little improbable when  
we do outreach.

I know each other from each other to start the beautiful  
humiliation, differently:

sleek jets, dark intensely urgent with their mystery, this sense of  
others we take with Vodka

and a violence of which there is enough in us to concern us. I am  
going to him and he will  
not come back to me would seem pleasurable,

but for the President on television, hungry for food and  
pertinently bearable.

## Love-Seat by Arrest

*Ricardo Maldonado*

Wednesday's shower was of two minds: Prohibition-era scald  
and glacial

we incur lapsed payment for the lease when the egg cartons  
cohere

in spare arrangement—

quick yolk replenishing linoleum tile,  
replete with wet investments (knit-wear, tartan beefsteaks in a  
surplus),

69 that manhood quits in private and in films with apologies of the  
dying  
middle-class

and retreads by fire escape where small amounts of smokers  
cease appeased

by spirit switch in the space of habitation—

miner-chested, courage tapering mid-week over Formica and  
black leather.

The units stand irresolute at still and are caressed by pigeon shit,  
could seize the city and riposte negotiations with the asphalt and  
the living

who approach with liberal measures of inside-time, civic fealty  
and the charm  
of insect bite and influenza

as we ready the body for the young to desert (with its insipid  
dental habits),

and demise enters the apartment else we would conquer it  
with panic and runners attire of orange elastene.

# Layaway

*Ricardo Maldonado*

We were acquiesced  
to the crimes of our disloyalties and slack exchanges.

Look, my life is not what I like  
it to be. This year, mornings imply an act of bravery.

We are figuring what it might be like to live  
knowing intimates and conflicts with size.

Look, we could prove what we have  
yet to dispraise.

71 Look, the window displays are changing.

All the males have mated and move on  
in the city's red gloss.

# Heterosexuality as Custom

*Ricardo Maldonado*

A sense of men's privacy and what they may have  
hidden when they remain

in indeterminate age, with meals and extravagant uniforms.  
They recede in a calming way before men

breach, before men resign  
the chance to tender their love of human history,  
as if they were exhausted by desire in the dangerous  
ceremony of male love,

72 and use an inside voice when activity begins—  
each search accompanied by sleeplessness, drink,  
and of course, the addictive life, with different contingencies  
for the commute.

*Peace, peace, Mercutio, peace*—thou talk'st of men's urgency  
and absolute diligence—men consumed

by enmity and what they are meant to retrieve,  
the milk now set to expiration.



from *After Life* by Mike Edrington

# A Quick Lesson in Grammar

*Eric Parker*

Lying is when you told me you don't have a lover.  
Laying takes a subject and object, and can be sexual:  
Your lover laid you while you lay in his bed, lying to me.  
In this case, he is the subject and you are the object.  
Either way, you got laid.

Which is slightly different than what happened in our matrimonial  
bed, where I was often lying awake,  
waiting for your late returns, while wondering  
if you were in an accident  
and lay bleeding on the freeway.  
You weren't.

74

Sometimes, people say they were laying on the beach,  
which is wrong, unless they were having sex on the beach,  
which is also a fruity drink ordered in bars. This is true.  
I wouldn't lie to you.

But most people merely lie on the beach, which I believe  
you did with him several times.  
Please tell me you didn't lay him on the beach, because  
while we often lay on the beach, we never laid on the beach.  
Which I regret.

Speaking of regrets,  
I wish—which means now we're in the subjunctive—  
you would have lied to me your whole life,  
so you could have lain with me for eternity.  
Or at least until death.



# This Is the Story of How I Got Sober Without Naming Names Like a Chump

*Cait Weiss*

Don't understand the idea of redemption — waste of time thinking 'bout that. Waste of time too that night you, in the Patriots hat, and I sat at the bar, mapped out how I knew life got me drunk.

You never expected I'd have to get sober.  
You circled around me like a dog flattening grass,  
plodding his way to lie down.

75

Lie better, an indictment you'd yet to shout,  
your voice yet to squeeze through the hole  
in my door. Lie better, lie quiet, lie  
low. Sex was the check at the end of an evening —  
expected, but hardly split fair.

Damn, we weren't happy, but we were something all right;  
tumbling fresh, "running drunk"—they'd yet to teach me  
the lingua recovery at church basement meetings, my hands  
yet to stroke those cheap plastic coins. 24 hours comes hard.  
But it comes.

Today it's just seltzer. When we divvy up tabs now, we don't have to get  
naked,  
and water from wine's an un-miraclized Christ.  
So we weren't happy, black smoke of tailblaze trailing, but damn  
we were something all right: two raging beings on a spiral from heaven,  
spewing rank starlight from sky.

# The Whole Ending

*Cait Weiss*

This hunger is more mouth  
than stomach — I will have no one to talk to  
once you're gone.

Roll the stone back up inside me  
pour concrete seal the breach.

If the angel'd only told me  
the whole story — the whole ending  
up atop that glorious hill

76

I would've calcified that embryo  
set to stone and froze this life — this you

flint of God inside.

\*

You cover the walls with maps  
inside the cave, strange child.  
Cities plastered while you  
gestate proof

son of whitewashed  
womb.

God I am your mother  
I am the husk  
you once called home

the shriveled cord  
that kept you human  
now unbound

I am

just one of three  
who waits.



from *After Life* by Mike Edrington

# Bleach

*Kate Click*

1. Claire Mays: March 9, 1967- October 14,1997

Graduate teaching assistant at University of Texas at Dallas; she is survived by her husband, Glenn Mays, her two sons, Brandon (18) and Matthew (10), and her daughter, Lindsey (6).

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2. I am six years old peeling bark off an oak tree. My best friend Lindsey sprawls out over a sun-bleached map of the United States painted on the blacktop, her honey hair burning into the cement. She rolls over Texas and Oklahoma and muses about animal crackers in the sky. I put the bark in my pockets. My overalls are covered with dried chocolate milk and grass stains. Mama will be mad. Lindsey's mom is picking us up today for our weekly play-date, but she is latelatelate. I watch the sun seep over the sea of brick houses and oversized Texas flags. It must be four o'clock. The sun always looks like a pricked fried egg at 4. The teacher with the hairy upper lip barks at us. Who-is-picking-you-girls-up?! It-is-latelatelate-and-I-have-a-BINGO-game. We are scared of this woman. She is the only teacher to throw balls during dodge ball (she always picks the overly pumped orange balls). She smells like pickles. Mrs. Mays does not come; the clouds are turning purple and cleaning up the runny egg in the sky. It is 5 o'clock. Teacher must have called my mom because I see her roly-poly van. We climb in the backseat, wiping our clammy hands on the fading blue fabric. I pull the bark from my overall pockets and put it in the cup holder under my sticker collection. Mama will never

find it. Lindsey asks why her mom didn't come. I see my mother's chestnut hair turn to gray as she pulls the van over, throwing us forward into the back pockets of the bucket seats; maps and magazines poking our salty faces. Lindsey rubs the hurt off her forehead. I see mama cry for the first time.

3. Lindsey and I were baptized with bleach and placed in thickly insulated bubbles of piety. We lived subject to faith with no gray area, a faith that left no room for spots. We weren't allowed to believe in the Tooth Fairy. We couldn't celebrate Halloween or listen to non-Christian music; if we were good enough, god would save up treasures in heaven for us, and if we were bad we would suffer the consequences. The god we came to know was the love child of Santa and Zeus. He was all-powerful and all knowing — a god with a white beard and fists full of coal and lightning bolts. We revered him with all we had, but our reverence was birthed from an all-consuming Fear. He knew we stole the glitter pencils from Mrs. Smith's desk. He knew we cheated on number three of our spelling test. He knew we practiced saying bad words in Lindsey's closet when we were supposed to be asleep. All we knew was that we would be punished. So we waited. Everyday, we waited for the whip of the god almighty, until one day, it came. Under a blaring red light and a set of shitty brakes, he fulfilled his wrath. Our eighteen-wheeler killer god, our ambulance too late god, our peach pit in the throat god — he brought us to our knees. We never questioned her death because we believed in our visceral souls that it was our fault -- god was simply giving us the receipt for our sins. We -- with our endless list of unforgivable iniquities, pre-dinner cake stuck in our pigtails — killed her.

When I was thirteen, I stopped writing letters to the Santa Claus god. I found a new God and a new zip code. Goodbye bloody sun, goodbye Lindsey. Hello rock and roll.

4. Mama is holding a toothbrush in one hand and a bucket of bleach in the other. She is talking at me so I won't notice she is crying again. The-floors-are-just-so-filthy! I-don't-know-why-you-bring-those-doggone-cleats-into-the-kitchen-after-I-have-repeatedly-told-you-not-to! Hiccup. I say I am sorry and run to get my toothbrush. I am going to make her laugh. I am dancing and yodeling and beating my chest with my cowboy toothbrush. Mooaaaooaaammuhh-louooooouuk-whaaauut-ieee-hauuuve — my feet catch a wet tile of linoleum and I am flying. When I open my eyes, my mama's face is a strawberry crying. I think she will be mad at me for running in the house, but she reaches for me instead. I curl up in her lap on the kitchen floor. The bleach is so close to my face that my eyes are blooming tears. She whispers a prayer. Mama's knees have little white diamonds in them that match the tile. She is shaking like she's cold, but beads of sweat crown her forehead. We go to the living room and she paints my nails and gets the baby pink polish all over my skin, but I don't tell her. She looks happy. Daddy calls and he tells me it is snowing where he is. I miss him, but I know I don't miss him as much as Mama does. I think that must be why she shivers so much lately. She just loves him so much that she wants it to be snowing here too. I have never seen snow. I write about this in my diary tonight next to a magazine cutout of a snowman.

5. Two summers of popsicle chins and monkey grass safaris af-

ter Mrs. Mays died, Lindsey and I turned death into an elaborate joke. Backyard murder mysteries and fatal Barbie car crashes, we laughed at the Reaper Grim. Lindsey faked her death on the living room carpet for every nanny who tried to unpack their suitcase or bat their eyelashes at her superman father. A heart attack mysteriously seized Lindsey on the right side of her chest, a blood bath of ketchup dripped from her temple. There was no end in sight for our well of deafening laughter. If Death was a joke, we could never see it as Fear. Shoveling dirt over Death's grave, we buried him deep with a cackle and a snort. But we were not deaf to his rattle.

82

6. I see now it was Fear that kept me small – not the god I cowered beneath, not even the jarring realization of death. I lived a quaking nightmare, acutely aware of the unavoidable darkness that would meet me. Somewhere between the folds of my brain and the crevices of my heart, there was a searing stamp of disapproval. I could not hide from this Fear — I was god's redheaded stepchild. And it wasn't just Mrs. Mays' death that proved my suspicion. I could stain everything good — my bony fingers always dipped in soot. There was — and still is — something that stirred violently inside of me wanting to do bad. My mother once told me that she envied me for being little. She said if you're small, the smoke that rises to blind men from goodness can never reach your eyes. Stay small, Little One, and death will never find you.

7. It broke my heart to learn Your home was not in the clouds, the heavenly host of marshmallow bolsters that the architect in me so loved to see. It was easier to understand You in the shape of a



super-glued cross than to see salvation in a heap of metal, to hear Your voice in a low autumn sigh, to feel grace in the lock of hair dancing between my eyelashes. God of the battered, used, and bothered — You are much closer than the lofty pulpit. In every grain of sand, every speck of dust, gold, and cotton sifted, You are there. When my burning heart sings at the rushing of the water, and the smoke rises high in front of my firecracker eyes, You kneel to meet me — alabaster jar trembling in my hands. You are deeper than my mother's well of tears, more infallible than death — You are bigger than Fear.

## To Carter

*Elizabeth Mayer*

Lady, I thought of you today, and how you always liked a good  
fountain soda.

On thousand-mile road trips we'd drive through drive-thrus in  
your mother's silver Subaru—

the one with the black, leather heated seats--and you'd get a coke,  
and I'd get a coffee.

Hey, remember that time

On the way to Chillicothe, when we missed our exit and nearly  
ended up in Wisconsin?

It smelled like snow that night in June, as you craned your neck  
toward the orange-vested toll collector.

She laughed at us as we turned around and drove south through  
the whole state of Illinois.

I felt like I was hallucinating the reflectors on the double yellows  
on the way to that weird motel where we finally stopped.

In the morning Illinois was gold and flat and full of corn; I  
thought it looked so

boring and missed Virginia with its peaks and valleys and  
beaches, and I felt so

landlocked and somehow nervous to be so far from the sea—the  
same reason you once said you could never live in New Mexico.

Then I said who needed the sea with all that sky, but now I know  
different because

though you did not stay, I can't help but remain—  
here, in my home—Virginia.



from *After Life* by Mike Edrington

## One Makes of Noise a Ladder

*Mathias Svalina*

One makes of noise a ladder. One climbs through the hole of noise. Inside the hole of noise is the whole of noise. Every part contains its everything. The able men with their shooting percentages contain the bodies of all the boys they fucked when they were boys. The cavernous mouths of infants clog with tumors. Blue eyes on the radiator, brown eyes on the floor, every house contains one's family, the size & shape of any possible house. One must only look in the garage to find all the mothers & fathers of the world lined up, patiently waiting to paint clouds in the nursery.

# The Body

*Mathias Svalina*

One might ask a child *Where is your twin? Where is your mirror image?* The child would answer *There is no twin. I am my own mirror image.*

## The Caretaker

*Mathias Svalina*

One must take care of the severed heads piled in the center of the church. People do not want their heads, after they are dead, to rot. The flowers may wither & the oaks attract the flame, but a head is a head for as long as it stays free of rot. When the severed heads speak they often say things like “Thanks, dude.” Only rarely does one find an ungracious severed head. They whine “Where is my breath?” “Where are those who promised to remember me?” Some of the caretakers put things in the mouths of the ungracious severed heads: muscle relaxers, a single long black hair, their dicks. But one should maintain composure. It is difficult to be a severed head, blinking constantly over drying & then dried eyes, tourists poking at the distended tongue, flashing snapshots like tigers’ stripes. At night, after the church closes & the neon lights have chilled, one must take the softest brush to each head individually. One must cradle the severed head in one hand, resting it on one’s knees, look closely at every part of it, searching for the rot that inevitably will appear.

# The Cave

*Mathias Svalina*

Animals seek refuge in the cave that occurs in one's body. One may wake with a raccoon there or ten thousands of bats. One may see three deer humping a sawhorse by the light of the full moon. What one knows depends on what one can see. For instance, one can see a woman in a black hoodie. Or one can see the IV emerging from one's arm & the other IV emerging from the veiny back of one's hand. Then one knows the hoodie, the IVs. When one enters the cave that occurs within one, one becomes the animal one knows how to be.

# The Quiet American

*Mathias Svalina*

One picks through the trash for flattened cans & bits of copper wire. Water drips from the malarial eyes of computer screens onto the discarded plastics below. There is always white smoke of flaming plastic. Always one's brothers & sisters twisting new contortions to reach below the heaps of trash. Mothers & fathers merge into a bit of black garbage bag flapping in the wind. Language fades in the sun. One thinks one is above this, but there is nothing above this. The world is a trash heap, the occupants searching through the smoke & carcasses.



## Contributors

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## **Anomalous Press**

launched in March of 2011 as a non-profit press dedicated to the diffusion of writing in the forms it can take. Its backbone is an editorial collective from different backgrounds and geographies that keep an eye out for compelling projects that, in any number of ways, challenge expectations of what writing and reading should be.

At the time of its launch, Anomalous is an online publication, available in both visual and audio forms on various platforms. It has its sights set on publishing chapbooks, advancing audio forms and creation, and supporting all sorts of alternative realities of the near future.

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