

HER ROYAL MAJESTY



ISSUE 9 • AUTUMN 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

cover	The Lotus Eaters II (detail), <i>Mia Funk</i>
2	letter from the editor
3	The Audience - Irish Writers, <i>Mia Funk</i>
4	English: an Ode, <i>Robert Hass</i>
7-8	Aokigahara, <i>Anne Herzog</i>
9	tree feelings, <i>Jody Zinner</i>
10	Word Verification, <i>Shirin Borthwick</i>
11	nothing left to say
12	CONTRACT, <i>Francene H.</i>
13	The Waeg, <i>James Gregor</i>
14	Nos Vies Invisibles, <i>Yann Ornan</i>
16	Sign, Language, <i>Julia Grummitt</i>
17	The Most Dangerous Painting, <i>Nathaniel Osollo</i>
18	The Big Boy Telecommutes from a Suburb in Paris, <i>Susie Kahlich</i>
19	The Problem of Describing Colour, <i>A. F. Matlock</i>
20	Vanités, <i>Mathilde Nivet</i>
21	The World, <i>Anne Herzog</i>
22	That all I sald was dead Before it left my mouth, <i>Jacob Bromberg</i>
23	Forever, Forever! , <i>Anne Marsella</i>
24	WRDS, <i>mtt dnn</i>
28	What Will You, <i>Matt Hetherington</i>
29	Nadir II, <i>Blackmarket Boo</i>
30	41 rue de la Grange aux Belles, <i>Nina Campbell</i>
30	Letters, part of a series, <i>Mathilde Nivet</i>
31	Some Words About You, <i>Ivan Jenson</i>
31	Language, <i>Colleen MacIsaac</i>
32	Walk it Off, <i>Lindsey Reynolds</i>
33	There are people learning English in this building, <i>Ali Richardson</i>
34	Venetian Blinds, <i>Harriet Alida Lye</i>
35	The Lotus Eaters II, <i>Mia Funk</i>

"In the beginning was the Word."

In a country where the language spoken is not my first, I am always living in a series of translations, and mistranslations. When I first moved to France, my tongue's recalcitrant stuttering and the flush that bloomed from my neck when I spoke meant I opened my mouth only when necessary. This, I am sure, influenced the way that my then-boyfriend saw me: when he described me as small and wispy, he was imposing the sound of silence on his vision of my frame, which neither I nor anyone I am close to has ever considered "wispy." Two years later, my second time living in France – still the same height, still the same weight, but with a tongue perhaps more nimble and adept at shaping my thoughts – he told me, over the polite formality of our long-empty coffee cups, that I was "moins maigre qu'avant." Because I was speaking confidently and competently, striding brazenly through the mistakes I was surely making, he no longer saw me as a fragile, languageless creature.

In Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, the title character lives among gypsies whose language he does not speak. He struggles not only to find ways to express himself, but also with the desire to communicate in the first place. "It is a curious fact," he says, "that though human beings have such imperfect means of communication, that they can only say 'good to eat' when they mean 'beautiful' and the other way about, they will yet endure ridicule and misunderstanding rather than keep any experience to themselves." Woolf recognizes the way we sacrifice our egos in the hope of being understood.

And when we are alone? When there is no one to listen to, or be heard by? Think of the tragic ending of "Into the Wild," the film based on John Krakauer's book about the life of Christopher McCandless. After months of rebellious solitude, McCandless eats a fatally poisonous plant and, in his last gasps before expiring, he scrawls in his encyclopaedia of forest flora and fauna "happiness is only real when shared." If I rolled my eyes it was only so my neighbour wouldn't see that they were leaking.

The myth of true understanding is glorified in encyclopaedias and manuals. In Rivka Galchen's essay on the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (the notorious DSM), published in *The Paris Magazine*, she writes that "categories give us new and illuminating ways of being wrong. Categories, in their shortcomings, remind us that we're always wrong, at least a little bit." Taxonomies are focusing lenses, but can't help falling short of what they attempt to define. A world where everything was its definition would be a nightmare somewhere between Egyptian mythology and a short story by Borges (for whom "to think is to generalize").

Language was the key to immortality for Renaissance poets and their subjects. Take Shakespeare's sonnet number 55: "Not marble, nor the gilded monuments/ Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme/....You live in this." Poet Christian Bok is pushing this idea to its limits with a project that will render the metaphor of immortality concrete: he is writing a poem which will be encoded in the DNA of a bacterium that he will create as he writes it. The bacterium will be resilient to illness and accident and, he projects, will be the only thing left when the world reaches its end. Each letter will be paired in such a way that every word will make sense when translated into a protein within the pattern Bok configures. In the beginning was the Word and at the end, all that's left will be a poem.

This issue of *Her Royal Majesty* explores the theme of language as one way that we understand and share our reality.

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Irish Writers
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English: an Ode

by Robert Hass

1.

¿De quien son las piedras del rio
que ven tus ojos, habitante?

Tiene un espejo la mañana.

2.

Jodhpurs: from a state in northeast India,
for the riding breeches of the polo-playing English.

Dhoti: once the dress of the despised,
it is practically a symbol of folk India.
One thinks of blood flowering in Gandhi's
after the zealot shot him.

Were one, therefore, to come across a child's primer
a rainy late winter afternoon in a used bookshop
in Hyde Park and notice, in fine script,
fading, on the title page,
"Susanna Mansergh, The Lodge, Little Shelford, Cmbs."
and underneath it, a fairly recent ball-point
in an adult hand: *Anna Sepulveda Garcia —sua libra*
and flip through pages which asseverate,
in captions enhanced by lively illustrations,
that *Jane wears jodhpurs*, while *Derek wears a dhoti*,
it wouldn't be unreasonable to assume a political implication,
lost, perhaps, on the children of Salvadoran refugees
studying English in a housing project in Chicago.

Ode: not connected, historically, to *odor* or to *odd*.
 To *mad*, though obsolete, meant “to behave insanely”
 and is quite another thing than to *madden*,
 meaning, of course, “to irritate.”

So that the melancholy Oxford cleric who wished to live
 “Far from the madding crowd’s ignoble strife”
 and gave Thomas Hardy the title for that novel
 was merely observing that people in large numbers
 living at close quarters act crazy
 and are best given a wide berth.

Not an option, perhaps,
 for a former high school math teacher
 from San Salvador whose sister, a secretary in the diocesan office
 of the Christian Labor Movement, was found
 in an alley with her neck broken, and who therefore
 followed her elder brother to Chicago and, perhaps,
 bought a child’s alphabet book in a used bookstore
 near the lake where it had languished for thirty years
 since the wife, perhaps, of an Irish professor of Commonwealth
 History

at the university had sold it in 1959 — maybe the child died
 of some childhood cancer — maybe she outgrew the primer
 and when her bookshelf began to fill with more grown-up books,
The Wind in the Willows, *Winnie-the-Pooh* —
 what privilege those titles suddenly call up! —
 her father, famous for his groundbreaking *Cold War and Commonwealth*
 of 1948, looking antique now on the miscellaneous shelf
 beside row on row of James T. Farrell, sold it. Or perhaps his wife
 did and found it painful to let her daughter’s childhood go,
 was depressed after. Probably she hated Chicago anyway.
 And, browsing, embittered, among the volumes on American history
 she somehow felt she should be reading,
 thought *Wisconsin, Chicago*: they killed them
 and took their language and then they used it
 to name the places that they’ve taken.

Perhaps the marriage survived. Back in London
 she may have started graduate school in German Lit.
 “Be ahead of all partings,” Rilke said in the Spender translation.
 Perhaps she was one of those lives — if the child did die
 of the sickness I chose to imagine — in which death
 inscribes a permanent before and after. Perhaps
 she was one of those whose story is innocence
 and a private wound and aftermath.

4.

-*Math*, as it turned out,
when she looked up the etymology
comes from an Anglo-Saxon word for mowing.
Maeth. It would have been the era
of "hot skirts" and The Rolling Stones.
And she a little old to enjoy it. Standing on Chelsea Embankment
after the Duncan Grant retrospective at the Tate,
thinking about the use of *du* in the *Duino Elegies*
or about the photo in the *Times* that morning
of the Buddhist monk in Saigon, wearing something
like a dhoti, immobile, sheathed in flames.

5.

There are those who think it's in fairly bad taste
to make habitual reference to social and political problems
in poems. To these people it seems a form of melodrama
or self-aggrandizement, which it no doubt partly is.
And there's no doubt either that these same people also tend
to feel that it ruins a perfectly good party
to be constantly making reference to the poor or oppressed
and their misfortunes in poems which don't,
after all, lift a finger to help them. Please
help yourself to the curried chicken.
What is the etymology of *curry*? Of *chicken*?
Wouldn't you like just another splash of chardonnay?
There's far less objection, generally speaking,
you will find yourself less at *loggerheads*
with the critics, by making mention of accidental death,
which might happen to any of us, which does not,
therefore, seem like moral nagging, and which is also,
in our way of seeing things, possibly tragic
and possibly absurd — "Helen Mansergh was thinking about
Rilke's pronouns
which may be why she never saw the taxi" — and thus
a subject much easier to ironize.

She — the mother from Salvador — may have bought several books.
Mother Goose, Goodnight, Moon. All
relatively cheap. And that night her brother might have come
with a bag of groceries. And — a gesture against sleet and ice —
flowers in January!
And the Salvadoran paper from Miami.

6.

Disaster: something wrong with the stars.

Loggerheads: heavy brass balls attached to long sticks; they were heated on shipboard and plunged into buckets of tar to soften it for use. By synecdoche were sailors tars.

And from the rage of living together in brutish conditions on a ship the tars were often at loggerheads. You could crush a man's knees with them easily. One swing. Claim it was an accident. If the buggers didn't believe you, the punishment was some number of lashes with the whip. Not death.

That was the punishment for sodomy, or striking an officer.

7.

“As when the Sun
in dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds . . . “
Mount Diablo foothills, green in the early spring.
Creeks running, scent of bay leaves in the air.

And we heard a high two-note whistle: once,
twice, and then again with a high vibrato tailing.
“What's that?” “Loggerhead shriek.”

(Years later one of the young poets at Iowa, impatient
with her ornithologist boyfriend, his naming
everything to death, her thinking *bird, bird!*)

8.

Imagine (from the Latin, *imago*, a likeness)
a language (also from Latin, *lingua*, the tongue)
purged (*purgo*, to cleanse) of history (not the Greek *hist*
for tissue, but the Greek *historia*,
to learn by inquiry). Not this net of circumstance
(*circum*, etc) that we are caught in,
ill-starred, quarried with veins of cruelty,
stupidity, bad luck,
which rhymes with *fuck*,
not the sweet act, the exclamation
of disgust, or maybe both
a little singing ode-like rhyme
because we live our lives in language and in time,
craving some pure idiomorphic dialect of the thing itself,
Adamic, electrified by clear tension
like the distance between a sparrow and a cat,
self and thing and eros as a god of wonder:
it sat upon a branch and sang: the bird.



9.

In one of Hardy's poems, a man named "Drummer Hodge,"
born in Lincolnshire where the country word
for twilight was *dimpsy* two centuries ago,
was a soldier buried in Afghanistan.
Some war that had nothing to do with him.
Face up according to the custom of his people
so that Hardy could imagine him gazing forever
into foreign constellations. *Cyn* was the Danish word
for farm. Hence Hodge's *cyn*.
And someone of that stock studied medicine.
Hence Hodgkin's lymphoma. *Lymph* from the Latin
meant once "a pure clear spring of water."
Hence *limpid*. But it came to mean
the white cells of the blood.

"His homely Northern breast and brain
Grow to some Southern tree
And strange-eyed constellations reign
His stars eternally."

10.

I have been hearing it all morning
As if it were a Spanish nonsense rhyme.
Like the poem of José Martí the woman in Chicago
might have sung to her children as they fell asleep:

Yo soy un hombre sincero
De donde crece la palma,
Y antes de morirme quiero
Echar mis versos del alma.

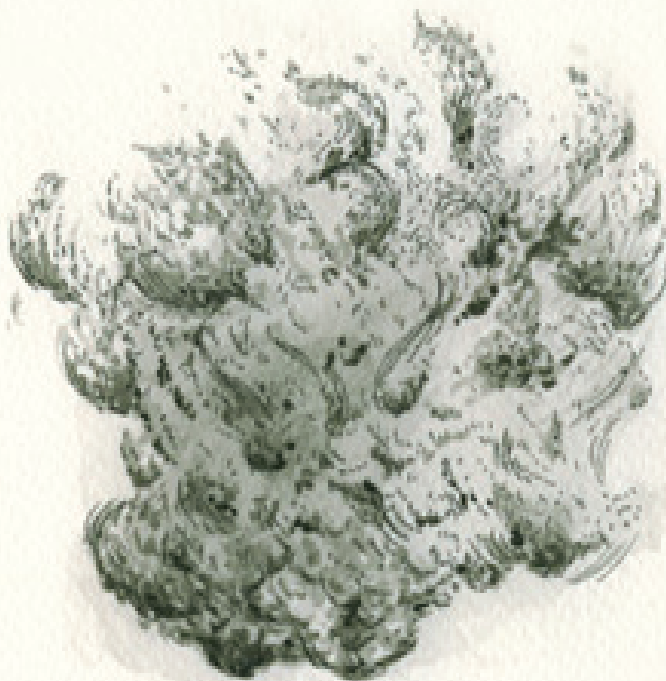
Do you hear it? She has (strong beat)
a Hodg (strong beat) kin's lym-phom (strong beat)-a.

This impure spring of language, strange-eyed,
"To scatter the verses of the soul."

11.

So — what are the river stones
that come swimming to your eyes, *habitante*?

They hold the hope of morning.



tree feelings
jody zinner

WORD VERIFICATION *by Shirin Borthwick*

PICALOWN *n.* One who pushes a “pull” door.

RAFFOR *n.* Laughter at how bad something is.

FERHOO *v.* To feel sorry for an inanimate object.

CHEABIE *n.* Quasi-hysterical quip made in the presence of a superior or beloved.

ENCEMPID *adj.* Worried by the absence of worries.

WHIDDET *n.* Especially crunchy-looking autumn leaf.

DEFRELAV *v.* To massage one’s back against a wall.

COILY *adj.* Anything that is cutting-edge uncool.

ORESSE *n.* Closed-mouth yawn detectable only by compression of the nostril-wings.

ROZEDER *n.* The beauty of empty spaces.

DISMEDU *n.* Negative emotion aroused by discovery that an item of paperwork has a reverse side.

EXCLATION *n.* Split-second of fear associated with loss of control on a trampoline.

SKERK *v.* To review one’s work with masturbatory pleasure.



nothing left to say

CONTRACT OF MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING PERTAINING TO A LIASON BETWEEN TWO PARTIES

WHEREAS _____, HEREINAFTER REFERRED TO AS PROSPECTIVE AMATOR, AND
_____, HEREINAFTER REFERRED TO AS PROSPECTIVE AMATRIX, HEREBY AGREE
ON THIS _____ DAY OF _____, IN THE YEAR _____, AS FOLLOWS:

1.
 - i. The parties desire to affix and define their respective rights and liabilities arising from their liason; As herein after defined in appendix Part 1
 - ii. Both parties acknowledge that they have read and understand this agreement, have not been subjected to any form of coercion, duress, or pressure, and believe this agreement to be fair and to represent their intentions with regard to their responsibilities arising from their liason
 - iii. Both parties agree to be bound to this liason for a minimum of one month
2.
 - i. Consideration for this Agreement consists solely of the mutual promises herein contained and the mutual promises of each party to act as Amator/Amatrix to the other
 - ii. This Agreement creates a fiduciary relationship between the parties in which each party agrees to act with the utmost of good faith and fair dealing toward the other in all other aspects of this Agreement
3.
 - i. This liason is/is not in preference to a Conventional Relationship as hereinafter defined in appendix Part 11 (delete as appropriate)
 - ii. This liason is/is not based on the sexual act (delete as appropriate)
 - iii. This liason is/is not based on love (delete as appropriate)
 - iv. This liason is known/unknown to others (delete as appropriate)
 - v. This liason is/is not sustainable in its current form (delete as appropriate)
 - vi. This liason requires/does not require obligation (delete as appropriate)
 - vii. This liason will/will not lead to a Conventional Relationship (delete as appropriate)
 - viii. This liason is/is not monogamous (delete as appropriate)
 - ix. Information is given freely and can be withheld at any time
4. Parties agree to review this agreement in 1/3/9 months (delete as appropriate).
Parties at that point either :
 - i. Mutually agree a termination
 - ii. Mutually agree to form a Conventional Relationship
 - iii. Should one of the said parties decide to terminate the contract at the said date both parties shall be satisfied with that decision and no right for compensation of termination of contract by other party
 - iv. Extend the agreement on the same terms for a similar period
5.
 - i. There are no other agreements between the parties regarding their liason other than those stated herein
 - ii. This agreement will become null and void upon the termination of liason and failure to observe contract conditions is grounds for termination without penalty of said liason
 - iii. This agreement will become null and void upon the legal marriage of the Amantes
 - iv. This agreement constitutes the entire agreement of the parties and may be modified in future as herein-before mentioned in paragraph 3
 - v. This agreement is made in accordance with the laws of the United Kingdom, and any dispute regarding its enforcement will be resolved by reference to the laws of that country. Failure to comply or breach of contract will result in equitable remedies being enforced
 - vi. It is the intent of the parties that this Agreement be the full and complete agreement between the parties regarding their liason

I HAVE READ THE ABOVE AGREEMENT AND TERMS AND CONDITIONS, I HAVE TAKEN TIME TO CONSIDER ITS IMPLICATIONS, I FULLY UNDERSTAND ITS CONTENTS, I AGREE TO ITS TERMS, AND I VOLUNTARILY SUBMIT TO ITS EXECUTION.

PROSPECTIVE AMATOR

PROSPECTIVE AMATRIX

Appendix I - Liason is defined between two parties who have no intention to hold property pertaining to full penetrative intercourse
Appendix II - Amator/Amatrix is defined as two parties who do not intend to share property and their lives in a recognizable union
Appendix III - Conventional Relationship is defined as a monogamous agreement between two parties, who share - or intend to share - property and their lives in a recognizable union
Appendix IV - Amantes is defined as the collective name for both parties

THE WAEG

by James Gregor

Billy draped the terri-cloth towel over the scalding pool deck and lay down. The sky was full of a perforating sunlight. It hurt his eyes. Sailboats drifted by in the Northwest Arm, their gasping sails unfurled by men in polarized sunglasses. He lifted his head and peered down the pale valley of his sternum, over the nylon of his blue Lacoste trunks. His legs were knobby and pale. Puberty had recently activated a wispy crescent of hair around his nipples.

His mother sat down on a deck chair beside him. She had been in the changing-rooms. "Crowded in there," she said. She was in a black bathing suit and a white shirt. She took a bulky hardcover out of a canvas bag and began reading.

Billy stared across the Lido, a large pale-blue tank dotted with manhole covers. On the other side there was a group of boys - tanned, not yet overly muscular, dressed in baggy colourful surf shorts. They were talking amongst themselves and peering over at two girls in yellow bikinis. Billy stared at their quarter-sized nipples, their shower-curtain shoulders, the small shadows of their belly buttons. They didn't look like...but you could never tell, as well he knew. No one knew he was either, except Arthur. For a moment he considered asking his mother for her phone to call Arthur. He would have to walk to the other end of the deck so she wouldn't hear. It would look suspicious, and Arthur's mother, a brusque, goat-voiced radiologist, might pick up. But maybe Arthur had come to his senses. Maybe they would meet up and Arthur wouldn't complain afterwards, face to the floor, about how he "felt like a pervert." Billy never felt anything afterwards, except a few residual shivers.

Towards the end of the semester, they had begun to dissect foetal pigs in biology class. The pigs were lashed into rectangular tin basins full of formaldehyde, their abdomens split open to reveal a cluster of organs. The students worked in pairs. Billy's partner was Arthur, a relatively popular boy he had never before spoken to. Arthur didn't want to touch the cold, aborted pigs. He wasn't a bad student but he said that science was not his "strength." He stood behind Billy and looked over his shoulder as Billy prodded the lidless, practically non-existent eyes, and tweezed the liquorice lace bundle of intestines from beneath the liver and stomach. Billy did the work happily, wearing safety goggles and a lab coat. Arthur's breath on his neck gave Billy an erection that ached against the fly of his jeans. When the teacher handed back their lab books, they both got A's.

They happened to live on opposite sides of Conrose Field. Billy began to get drives in the minivan piloted by Arthur's babysitter Janet. Janet smelled like Tiger Balm and wore a small iron cross that thumped against her breast bone when she walked. She was easily distract-

ible; there was a guest bedroom in the basement of Arthur's house that smelled of potpourri and a video game they could leave on as an excuse for being down there. For a while, it all worked out. When Arthur wasn't in the mood to wrestle, he painted a toboggan or sanded down a skateboard. Billy sat on a stool and watched him work, growing accustomed to his sloe-eyed stare, and the foamy, cakey brain that had such a thick, sentimental crust, and made Arthur swallow tears when he saw a bird dragging its wing around the backyard. Billy had even met Arthur's parents, having stayed over for dinner twice, and then walked home in the lengthening evening. He'd run up to his room and change out of his sticky underwear, and then he'd lie on his bed and dream. Waking up, he'd find a plate of apple slices that his mother had left on his bedside table.

A seagull flew over the Lido, screaming. The girls in yellow bikinis giggled, revealing alarming rib cages, and glanced over their shoulders.

"Don't be jealous of them," his mother said, noticing Billy staring at the group of boys. "You'll get a growth spurt soon."

"Hmmm."

"They're stunting themselves by working out too much. Look how short and thick they are."

One of the boys said something. They all shook with laughter, displaying lustrous white teeth. Billy rolled over. It was three weeks since he'd seen Arthur. He had called twice but Arthur was never home, or so his mother said. He was always off skateboarding with his friends. Billy imagined him standing with his skateboard at the Commons, dressed in black jeans despite the heat, nodding behind sunglasses, going into McDonald's for a vanilla milkshake, and then rolling down the street holding it in his hand.

Billy's mother was waving.

"There's Enid," she said.

Billy was staring at an egg-shaped cloud. When he closed his eyes, he could see the traffic of veins on his eyelids.

"Look there's Enid on the boardwalk. Can you see her?"

The egg grew a wing.

"I personally can't see her."

"I'm going to go and say hi."



People were walking down the zigzagging boardwalk with their paper boats of french fries, caught in the mottled tree shadows. Others were cannonballing into the water, or going down the old slide. The lifeguard, a tall, gangly blond, sat in his elevated chair, the laughable affectation of zinc across his nose.

Billy watched his mother go towards the boardwalk. It amused him sometimes to think how little she knew him. But then again, what did he know about her? She would go to bowling alleys sometime, and come home wearing a tangle of masculine smells. He didn't want to know her secrets.

The day before, lounging on her bed as she painted her toenails, Billy had read in a magazine that it was unattractive for a man to worry about his looks. There was a picture of a frowning model in a turtleneck with a pre-historic jaw line, irreproachable teeth, and caramel hair. The caption read: It's not sexy, guys! After going and deliberating in the murky pocket of the bathtub, he concluded that it was a possible explanation for why Arthur didn't want to see him anymore. When he stepped out of the bath and caught his splotchy body in the mirror, shame and disgust shuddered through him. He pictured himself impaled on the extruded silver faucet.

On the last day of school, Arthur said "Let's not, okay?" clutching a basketball to his chest. It was after final period. Billy thought they might get a milkshake together. They were standing by the front door of the school, in a dappled river of students flinging paper into the air, dumping out backpacks, and boasting about what they were going to drink that night. The sky was hot and wavy. The air was full of syrupy excretions from near-hanging laurel. Arthur wore a basketball jersey and had on an old Toronto Blue Jays cap. He picked at his teeth with a bendable straw.

"Why?" Billy said.

"It's gross," Arthur said.

"It's gross?"

"You just sit there while I work, watching me. It's gross."

They were jostled by a group of students running past.

"Hey dude,"

A budding Matthew McConaughey clapped Arthur on the shoulder.

"You wanna go dunk for a bit?"

"Sure," Arthur said.

He handed Billy a bottle of white-out they had shared for their lab assignments. Then he jogged off, dribbling the basketball.



SIGN, LANGUAGE
Julia Grummitt

THE MOST DANGEROUS PAINTING

Nathaniel Osollo



This painting will kill any spectator if viewed fully assembled. I painted it in sections to stay myself from harm. Only one piece of the work remains intact and is on display in Tumba, Sweden in the Labyrint Press permanent collection. I have hidden the piece there should the world ever require it's power.

THE BIG BOY TELECOMMUTES FROM A SUBURB OF PARIS

Draw a line connecting the dialog in Column B to the paragraphs you think they belong to in Column A. Remember, not every item in Column A goes with dialog in Column B!

COLUMN A

The Big Boy is 36 years old now, and autonomous. While he does not work for himself, everything he does is for himself:

1. he makes his own hours, 2. he works from home, 3. he lives on his own.

The Big Boy facilitates constructive communication in every language between his company and its customers all over the world.

He does all this from his 60 square meter apartment. He lives in a suburb of Paris.

The Big Boy has no friends. He claims it's because he works a lot even though he could get his work done in two hours if he wanted. He is fond of recounting tales of the toys he has purchased and destroyed; each one, he explains, bought as a gift for a child but the children are never interested in the toys he buys so he winds up playing with them instead, and breaking them.

The Big Boy is lonely.

When the Big Boy meets someone new, he always invites them to play tennis with him.

Four years ago, when the Big Boy moved to this suburb, he joined the local sports club. But he doesn't use it that much, because it's not very much fun alone. He owns two tennis rackets in case he finds someone to play tennis with him. He's pretty sure of the terrible velocity of his serve.

Sometimes people say: Yes, I will play tennis with you, Big Boy; but that's because they do not yet know exactly who he is. They only find out once they arrive at the club and learn that their tennis game is scheduled for two hours later than Big Boy asked them to arrive, and it dawns on them over the ensuing two hours that what they thought was a simple tennis date to advance social networking and build new business contacts is, in fact, an 8-hour play date with the Big Boy.

The Big Boy did try all the water slides in the sports club's outdoor pool area when he first joined, and he gave mini golf a go, but he didn't see much point in either one of these activities. Except maybe the water slides he could see some point in but he has a hard time articulating exactly what that point is, even though he graduated with a degree in communications.

The Big Boy has so far never lost this race. After he wins again, he flops onto the grass, belly up, arms spread and gasping at the clouds high above.

It doesn't matter what you say. The Big Boy really thinks the bar of chocolate is the tipping point and this makes him happy because it works every time and, every time, he knows he will never have to pay up.

COLUMN B

It's the biggest sports club in all of Paris. There are 200 different classes you can take.

All the courts were reserved.

Will you run with me to that tree over there?

With today's technology, there is no place I ever really need to be, so I can be everywhere. It was pretty fun flying that remote-controlled helicopter but when it crashed into a tree, after a while, I just left it there.

I've been living here for almost four years now and I know where everything is, so I guess this is home.

Will you go to the pool with me now?

My friends at college would introduce me by saying: this guy studies harder than anyone we know!

I can get my work done in two hours if I want.

What changed your mind about racing me?

I thought about subletting when I travel, but I have too many papers I don't want people to see.

Was it because I promised you a bar of chocolate if you won?

I can't really compare it to anyone's professionally, but nobody has ever returned my serve so I pull back a lot. If you measured the speed you probably would find it as fast as Federer's or Nadal's.

How high do you think those clouds are?

by Susie Kahlich

The Problem of Describing Colour

by A. F. Matlock

His hair is yellow-beige like the wheat grass growing in the dunes

His face is pink-yellow-peach-beige like his t-shirt, and the sand, and

His arms (though his arms are a little more pink-peach-beige-brown,
probably having tasted the liberty of life without sun-block)

His shovel is the sunny shock of the flowers that look just like butter-
cups, but are not buttercups

His shorts are the non-green colour of the scrub that grows in the sand

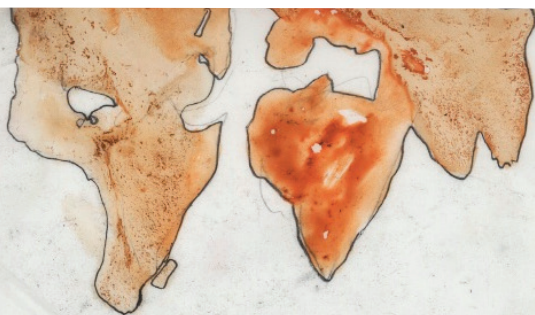
And yet he is visible : I am watching him dig
himself into a hole on the beach.



Vanités, Mathilde Nivet

world is hogard
world is muff

world is muezzin
world is is a muff
world is a muffin
world is a mulot
world is muldipratus muggy
the world is a mudism
the world is a mudism



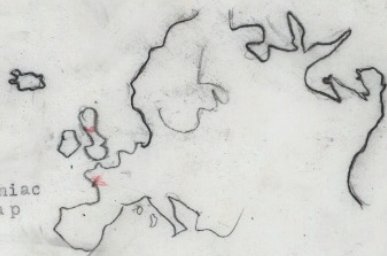
world is musky is musulman
the world is musky
the world is mus
the world is a mudinery
the world is mudism
the world is mudier



the world is mudual
the world is muzzle
the world is muzzzy
the world is my

the world is myope
the world is 1 myrmiden
the world is myrdle

the world is mysderies
the world is mysderious
the world is mysdery
the world is mysdiwcal
the world is a mydh
the world is mydhic
the world is a mydhomaniac
the world is a map



[THAT ALL I SAID WAS DEAD BEFORE IT LEFT MY MOUTH]

by Jacob Bromberg

That all I said was dead before it left my mouth.

Or less like dead as not so much alive.

The point is there was nothing on my mind.

Insectile forms are scuttling underground.

“Insectile forms were skulking underground?”

The point is not to talk in a straight line.

(Or more like leave a space for the odd off-rhyme.)

FAILED SONNET

Forever! Forever!

by Anne Marsella

*F*aithful to French tradition, on Saint Catherine's day of her twenty-fifth year, Mademoiselle Mignon wore a hat for the Catherinettes to bring attention to her nubility. Hers was a Dior confection of burgundy velvet and like a hundred other Parisian girls of the same age and society, she donned it for a day, throwing rice in the eye of admiration. And that evening at the Bal des Catherinettes held in her father's château in Fontainebleau, how ravishing she was in heirloom three quarter gloves and the Dior dress tailored exclusively for the hat! The hat! Any hint of spinsterhood it might have suggested was feeble, indeed, overridden by its heady invitation for amorous play. It was Henri Pinot de Chassy, a promising young diplomat, who led her that night by the hat into the forest, where he rough handled her on a bed of pine needles, thrusting for his pleasure, not hers. And in the days following she found herself with a terrible foulness below which she confessed with shame to her former wet-nurse and maid, Maria. It pained her to be so exposed, but there was greater cruelty in abandonment and she waited for Maria, who had mocked but never forsaken her, to make her better with a poultice. For two months she had awaited the return of Henri Pinot de Chassy who had been sent on mission to Asia. Her distress was such when he arrived with a child bride, a princess who spoke French as if her nostrils were beaded with pearls, that she broke out again with the gift he had given her in the forest; not a love token but a disease.

When at age twenty-seven she had still not found a suitable fiancé, Mademoiselle Mignon was given a job making photocopies and shredding paper for the Minister of Culture, a friend and debtor of her father's. Both men shared the same mistress, a woman called Madame de Monthéry although only she knew this. She had seen each man take this woman whose ankles she found too thick for beauty into cloven rooms from which she eventually emerged fresh as parsley sprig and they, limp but elated. Certainly at forty-five, Madame de Monthéry had something, perhaps erotic convictions, she did not and never would have. Mademoiselle Mignon had also been the Minister's lover, but for four days only. On the fourth day her love beat its wings and bruised the Minister in an unforgivable manner, bringing a precocious close to the affair, although fortunately for her, not to her job. She was given, rather, an exceptional number of holidays all paid for by the Ministry budget.

Perhaps a trip to Papeete would have been a success and love there would have come as windfall, only Mademoiselle Mignon could not muster it. The possibility of travel mocked her; she feared foreign lands where men might desire those parts of her she kept confidential. What if a savage man wanted the coiled muscle of her inner ear? Would she give it? Ah! She knew she would if he asked. "Take the snail!" she would say with her hand cupped full of shimmering fluid and hearing coil. "Take it my love! Put it to your ear and you will hear my heart!" Her emotion, grossly undernourished, would lead her to this; she would do it. Give anything! And this, followed always by her prayer to the Lord; "They have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones! Within your wounds, O Lord, hide me!"

Every evening and twice a day when on holiday, Mademoiselle Mignon took refuge in the side chapel of the Eglise Sainte Clotilde. Here, in the Holy Roman and Apostolic Church she had never been cast aside. "Come my child," Soeur Micheline with a fairy's voice and hand, would urge her, "Pray beside me." Mademoiselle Mignon joined her for rosary, a prayer for barren women and the departed souls. Apart from a secretary at the Ministry who had been killed the previous summer by an avalanche, she had never known a person to die, although she sometimes thought of the Minister's death. He, she saw, would fall uninhibitedly like a top-heavy tree and a lumber truck would take him away. "For paper!" she said playfully to herself, "for paper!" Cruel death! She knew it was rude and irreversible but could not stop herself. Hadn't she once loved him? She had. And she remembered her first glimpse of his sex and beneath his sack; it nestled between his thighs like the Sacred Heart. That image had imprinted itself on her mind's eye: the Sacred Heart set to such purpose! It was after all something a man possessed and not quite divine. From God to man. And woman? "She," thought Mademoiselle Mignon, "endures."

Once while quietly at prayer in the side chapel, she heard a man behind her rubbing his sex and smelled the syrupy linctus she used to lick from Maria's spoon as a child when ill. "Holy Mother," she prayed fervently. "Remind me not of the spoon!" And suddenly all the sickness she had ever known, stirred in her belly. "Not the spoon!" she supplicated. Yet the spoon prevailed, working like a beater until the ill rose up and was spewed. With the silk scarf she wore over her shoulders, Catherine cleaned her vomit from the pew, and when she turned around, saw that the pervert had left. She wondered for a moment if he had had his pleasure. A wave of nausea came over her again. She sang to ward it away, "Kyrie, Kyrieleison, Kyrieleison...." and left Sainte Clothilde with her belly emptied but for a thorn.

The farthest Mademoiselle ventured from Paris was Fontainebleau. She never went there alone but always with Maria. Sometimes they would stay at her father's château for a month at a time and invite a retired priest for the sojourn so that mass would be said daily in the family chapel. The maid herself was one of the faithful and could wine and dine a priest splendidly, provide him with pipes and pillows at his convenience. It was always one of two who came, Père Gregoire, who pitied them, and Père Guillaume who played cards with them. Both priests commended the château on its capacious wine cellar and neither neglected it. Mademoiselle Mignon, who usually ate alone, rather liked dining with a priest and would engage him in rudimentary discussions of eschatology. The doctrine of Heaven and Hell required the sort of belief that she was most capable of. "Saint Rosa of Lima, the exceedingly pretty seamstress," she would say, "has certainly been granted peace in heaven as she is a saint. And she is a saint not only for her goodness and purity of soul, but mostly for having defiled her lovely face with quicklime so that she could only serve the Lord and never a husband. But, Father, what if she had not done this? What if she had not burned her beautiful skin and had led the same life in devotion to the Lord? Would she then still have been a saint and gained the kingdom of heaven? Time itself would have done havoc to her beauty, but is aging naturally as all women do the same as the untimely loss of all graciousness? I believe not! I am sure it was because of her affliction. The afflicted above all others are welcomed into Heaven. The Father does not forsake his wounded creation."

Mademoiselle Mignon was fascinated by eternity and as a child played the Saint Teresa of Avila game, requiring she repeat the words, "For ever! For ever!" while pretending to be beheaded by a Moor. She often questioned the priests about the meaning of martyrdom, but neither could satisfy her curiosity. Père Guillaume had had his ears boxed in Algeria; perhaps he could not hear her. Père Gregoire was retired from theology; it would have bored him to teach the girl who had only learned the catechism by hearsay.

He had known such women before, women whose lives could fit into an hourglass. Women who would not marry, not because they lacked beauty, but because their peculiar, arrested hearts made for unappealing love. They were skipped over again and again. They were the chosen ones, passed over by men, taken under the Lord's thigh. One day all of Mademoiselle Mignon's money would go to the church.

On the Toussaint holiday at the end of her thirty-fifth year, Mademoiselle Mignon, who had always loved the forest in the fall months most, went with Maria and Père Grégoire to spend a week at the Château. Yet no sooner had they arrived when both Maria and the priest took to bed with the Oriental grippe, and rather than take leisurely walks in the woods, Mademoiselle found herself acting as nurse. She rallied her forces to get through several bitter days of tending to fevers and bedpans, but at last her nerves cracked and she decided to seek a nurse in the town, a woman like the good Sisters of Sierra Leone to whom she sent a check every month and who nursed the black lepers with unguents. She set out then in her father's car down the Château's damp, tree-lined drive.

It was not a habit of Mademoiselle Mignon's to drive into town; she only went there occasionally for appointments with a couturier or to purchase pâtés at a very fine caterer. Once she had gone there for an assignation with a handsome barber named Samir, who, she realized after having eaten at his table and bed, was a Moor, a Heretic! A phantom fire burned inside her, and she had gone to Maria weeping and crying for help. Absolution came by way of an intimate vinegar cleanse and this episode was soon forgotten, as were all her poorly turned love affairs. In any case, Mademoiselle Mignon did not think of her jaunt with the Moor as she drove to Fontainebleau. She hungered to be out in the chilly air under the crisp autumn sky and unrolled the car windows. The ardent trees spoke to her spirits; the forest and sky beckoned her to move quickly and intrepidly into the world. Her foot on the pedal pressed assuredly, not bound by human greed and worry as a foot usually is. A higher instinct held sway and she obeyed it, giving in to a recklessness reserved for the devout alone. On the side of the road up ahead she saw a man standing under a shelter most likely waiting for the infrequent bus that passed through the forest to serve the surrounding villages. Whether it was the Lord commanding her foot or the magnetic pull of the solitary figure she could not have said, but she felt compelled to pull over. From then on it was all a matter of faith: she believed the car stopped and it stopped; she believed the young man – she now saw he was no more than twenty – needed her assistance and she assisted. His head gripped his shoulder as if it had been sewn there in the womb. "He's a simpleton!" she said under her breath. "He's a child of God!" Feeling a mixture of apprehension and pity, Mademoiselle Mignon got out of the car and went to him. The young man quaked and his mouth hung open, pooling with saliva. It looked to Mademoiselle Mignon that his muscles were at cross purposes with his bones.

"Excuse me sir, are you lost?" she asked with concern. The man did not answer her but smiled into his chest. "You poor man," she went on, "you must be lost. And in the middle of nowhere! Where do you live?" The man continued to smile excitedly but without focus. Drool dribbled from the corner of his mouth. "That's all right," she said more to herself than to him. "Can I check in your pocket?" She didn't wait for an answer but put her hand in his coat pocket, feeling for a wallet that might have his identification papers. As she rummaged her hand through his other pockets, the man began to laugh convulsively as if he were being tickled. "That doesn't tickle, does it?" she asked playfully as if surprised. He looked so sweet and child-like and perhaps he found her pretty. She was certain that he did! He had been so lost and alone and there she was to help him. How perfectly this had happened, as if they had been brought together by divine ministration! He was her little bird!

Unnamed and with a shiny breast, a beak the size of a berry. "Ah! No papers!" she said at last. "How will I know your name?" The young man smiled again at his unabashed secret and offered her another feast of his laughter. She joined him at his table giggling coquettishly. "I will have to name you then. Let's see... I think I'll call you Mr. Tuesday. Isn't that what day it is? Please come into the car, Mr. Tuesday. I'll help you find your home." She led the man by the arm to the car, helping him get in. His legs were rather long and you in the forest, Mr. Tuesday? You need a friend!" knock-kneed and she had to push the seat back to make room for them. As she leaned over to fasten his seat belt, she felt her breast rub against his mouth and imagined for a second that his lips closed on one. An excitement perused her body. "We're heading towards town, Mr. Tuesday. I think that's where you want to go, isn't it?" The man sat quietly and comfortably, his head fell a bit more restfully on his shoulder. "Here," she said pulling a box of biscuits from the glove compartment, "have something to eat Mr. Tuesday. I believe you're hungry." Mr. Tuesday hit the box against his knee distractedly until it fell from his hands. "Let me open that for you. It's a bit tricky." Freeing one hand from the wheel, she managed to pick the box back up and open it with her teeth. She took out several cakes and gave them to Mr. Tuesday who began to eat them messily and with much wetness. When he finished, a grayish paste ringed his mouth, fattening his lips. Mademoiselle Mignon wiped it with a handkerchief. "Who was looking after you in the forest, Mr. Tuesday? You need a friend!"

They had driven some fifteen minutes when Mademoiselle Mignon saw a church spire in the village ahead. It was a quarter to five by her watch; they would get there for five o'clock mass. This was a great relief to her as for several days she had not received communion; in fact she could not even remember what she had eaten and drank since the grippe brought down Maria and Père. "Would you like to come to mass with me, Mr. Tuesday? You'll get home a bit later. But you don't mind, do you?" She looked over at her friend and it came to her that if she were to stroke his neck gently like a velvety stalk, his head might be coaxed up. Once she had resuscitated a carnation like this. "Oh Mr. Tuesday, you do look sleepy, but it's time for us to pray!" Mademoiselle Mignon parked her car alongside the road and checked herself in the rear-view mirror before getting out. She put on fresh lipstick and scent. Then she looked down at her clothes to check for any stains she might have acquired from emptying the morning's bedpans and discovered a wet spot on her chest the size of a brooch. She felt a pang of magnanimity and nearly put her arms around her friend, but said to him instead, "Don't worry, Mr. Tuesday. You are my dear friend."

There were only a dozen people attending mass. Mademoiselle Mignon and Mr. Tuesday sat in the third pew on the right. When it was time to kneel, both kneeled, but when it was time to pray, only one prayed. Or so it appeared. In truth it was impossible to know if Mr. Tuesday entered into communion with the Lord. Mademoiselle Mignon intensified her orison for him, for his neck and his voice, for his ears and his affliction. "I'm sorry to say, Mr. Tuesday," she whispered in his ear before communion, "that you will not be able to receive Holy Eucharist. You ate biscuits just a half an hour ago. Watch me go and the next time you'll know what to do. I'll pray for you." Mademoiselle Mignon walked up to the priest, her head bowed, and took the wafer on her tongue. A strange, hawking noise rose up from behind her. She turned to find her seat and saw Mr. Tuesday laughing convulsively through his nose. "Hush, Mr. Tuesday," she admonished him, "You are in the house of God. Please behave yourself." She tried to calm him with soft cooing and caresses, but he shook and his laughter turned strident, like a monkey's shriek. His limbs grew rigid and she became aware of their strength when she tried to bend his arm to lead him outside. "Come along, Mr. Tuesday. You want to see the car again, don't you? You quite liked it. The rest of the mass isn't so important. Just the Eucharist. So now we can leave."

When she finally managed to wrap her arm around his and get a firm grip on him, she guided him down the aisle and out of the church. Twice his legs buckled; she nearly fell on top of him and this gave her goose flesh. But she had that day, unusually dry stamina.

Mr. Tuesday's risibility did not subside until they reached the car; the sight of it calmed his body. "I'm glad you're better" she said with relief. "I know that you wanted to take communion and I promise you that next time you will! Watch your head, Mr. Tuesday. I want you to get in without any injuries!" She put her hand on his head to protect it and once he was in, fastened his belt, wiping her chest against his mouth. As her breasts brushed against him she felt in her left one a searing pain. "Ouch!" she screamed. "That hurts Mr. Tuesday. Stop it! Please let go!" He held half of her breast firmly between his clenched teeth. The pain shocked her. "Let go! You're hurting me! Let go and I'll take you home Mr. Tuesday. Please let go!" Mr. Tuesday did release her, but brought his arm firmly around her hips, pinning her to his lap. She slid down through his hold so that as she tried to escape, he grabbed her at the waist, then the shoulders and lastly the neck. Around her neck, his arm fit like a ring and fit so well that she lost all awareness of it.

As she had in many a dream, Mademoiselle Mignon found herself in the dressing room of a Parisian salon. She was greeted there by a bustling priest who told her she must take off her hat.

"That is not my hat, Father, that is my head!"

"Then take off your head! That is not allowed in the Church!" Knowing his request to be impossible, she took off her shoes and put them on a chair. They smelled like an over-ripe cheese and she felt humiliated. But the priest had no reproach and let her go to the altar, which was just a mirror and a chair. There she knelt and prayed with the vitality of an eagle; she petitioned to the apostle of Ethiopia and to Jesus' brother Jude. Both told her she was wearing a hat. Disbelieving, she looked up and saw that indeed there was one -- a pageantry hat, oversized and unfashionable. "For ever! For ever!" she cried out. But eternity was wrung from her and her hat was joined by a bevy of others decorated with fruit.

Mademoiselle Mignon woke up to find herself in her own baldachin bed. She was alone in her room, although there were hints that others had been there, watching over her. Maria, certainly, who was maudlin and mean, but always loyal. How many times had she bathed her shame! She saw traces of Père in the room, a matchbook from a Paris bistro, ashes from his pipe and thought of him for the first time as a man with his own particular rules and desires. Mademoiselle put on her robe and made her way downstairs to the kitchen. She was light-headed and so hungry! Her fingers fluttered against her ribs; she imagined they were the calcified bars of a birdcage, an empty one, without a single winged captive. A giddy laugh nearly escaped her, but its upward rush hurt her and she stifled it.

From downstairs a rich smell reached her, a fragrance of brandy and vanilla bean. Mademoiselle Mignon went to the kitchen and discovered it was her feast day. The feast day of her thirty-sixth year. The feast of Saint Catherine.

Catherine Mignon wore her hair brushed back and flatly cleaved to her head at dinner that night. She looked darker than a blond and quite lovely. A strand of rubies and bruises set off her long, slender neck. She bowed her head as the priest blessed the meal with his arms outstretched as he did. Every meal with a priest was like this. Grace was always said and had always come. Before they began eating, Catherine raised her crystal wineglass to the others and made a voiceless toast with her lips.

WHAT WILL YOU

will what you say
you would wish while
i want only what
you would have where
you and i both
wholly wish to place
each share of ourselves
with carelessness only where
every woman's & man's
waiting asks for wonder
which will serve within
& for others without
to save each other's
& all our wisdom
from some worse overthrow
into somewhere which would
stop when we are
one or is it
love?



by Matt Hetherington



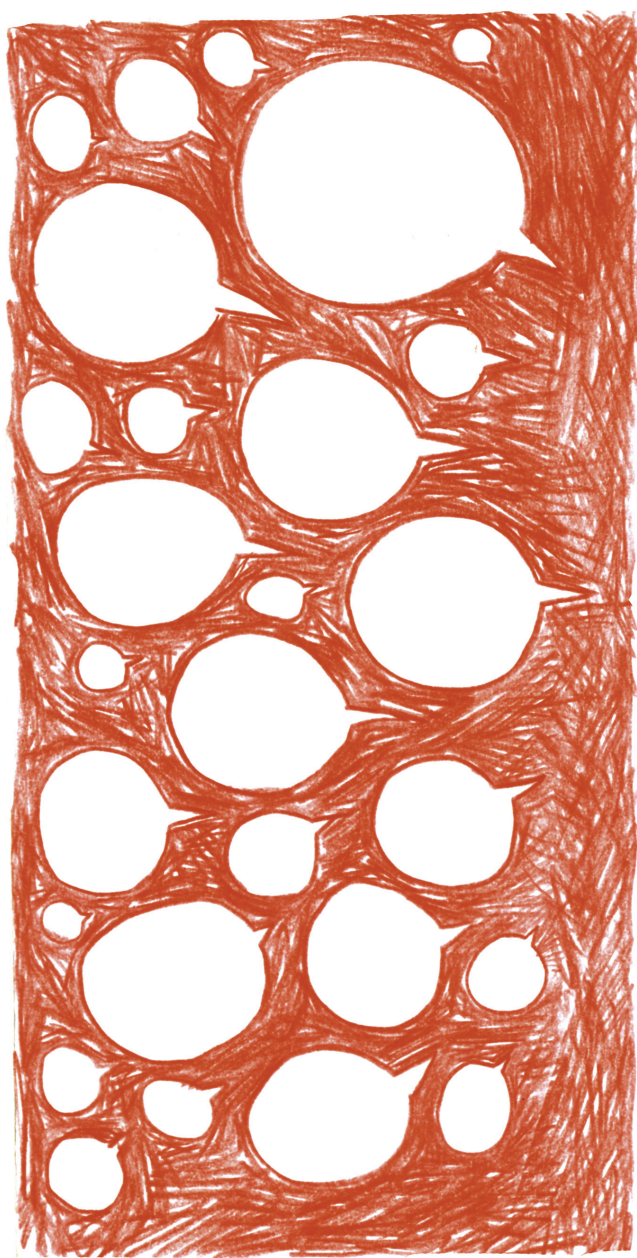
NADIR II
Blackmarket Boo

41, RUE DE LA GRANGE AUX BELLES
Nina Campbell

Why - what - is that infernal red flashing?
Is it coming from my heart, or through the window?



Letters, part two of series
Mathilde Nivet



SOME WORDS ABOUT YOU

by Ivan Jenson

In Manhattan
you performed in
cabarets
featuring torch song
hopefuls

like you they
dreamed of going
gold
before turning to ash

then, unexpectedly
you fell through
a rip in your pocket

down
into the land
between buildings

while nightly
the dailies kept
printing

not one word
about you





WALK IT OFF
Lindsey Reynolds

THERE ARE PEOPLE LEARNING ENGLISH IN THIS BUILDING
by Ali Richardson

They sit by the (water) fountain and giggle at the (bathroom) mirror
I can hear them saying words they've used fewer than
One hundred times
New pieces of glass and rubber in their mouths
Some too sharp and some all pressed together
The girls are tiny like dolls dressed to look too old
The boys have (big) curly hair to hide things in
They are noisy and new and dark
But speaking English
They become homogenous
Differences and definitions are smoothed
And they all become children again
Pushing broken sentences out of their mouths like
Baby food.
There are people learning English in this building.

THE VENETIAN BLINDS

by Harriet Alida Lye

A blind Argentinean psychoanalyst by the name of Horacio Amigorena, with whom I have been in correspondence, has invited me to his holiday home on an island in Venice.

If I go, it will be the first time I lay eyes on him. I have been working as his translator, rendering his essays on “Emasculation of French Nouns” into a less supple English, for the last eleven months.

He wrote in an recent email: “I imagine you written near a window, angles [sic] falling in your face, face to the Church de Jesuiti.”

I did not want to correct “written” for “writing.”

I cannot picture the scene, writing in front of a church, because I don’t imagine seeing anything in Venice. I imagine, upon arrival, being blinded, and experiencing the city through the senses of this 80 year-old man.

Blind, would I be able to write ?

When he invited me, I saw us standing next to each other on a bridge facing the sunset, the alligator and the turtle, our faces warm, our eyes closed.



THE LOTUS EATERS II
Mia Funk