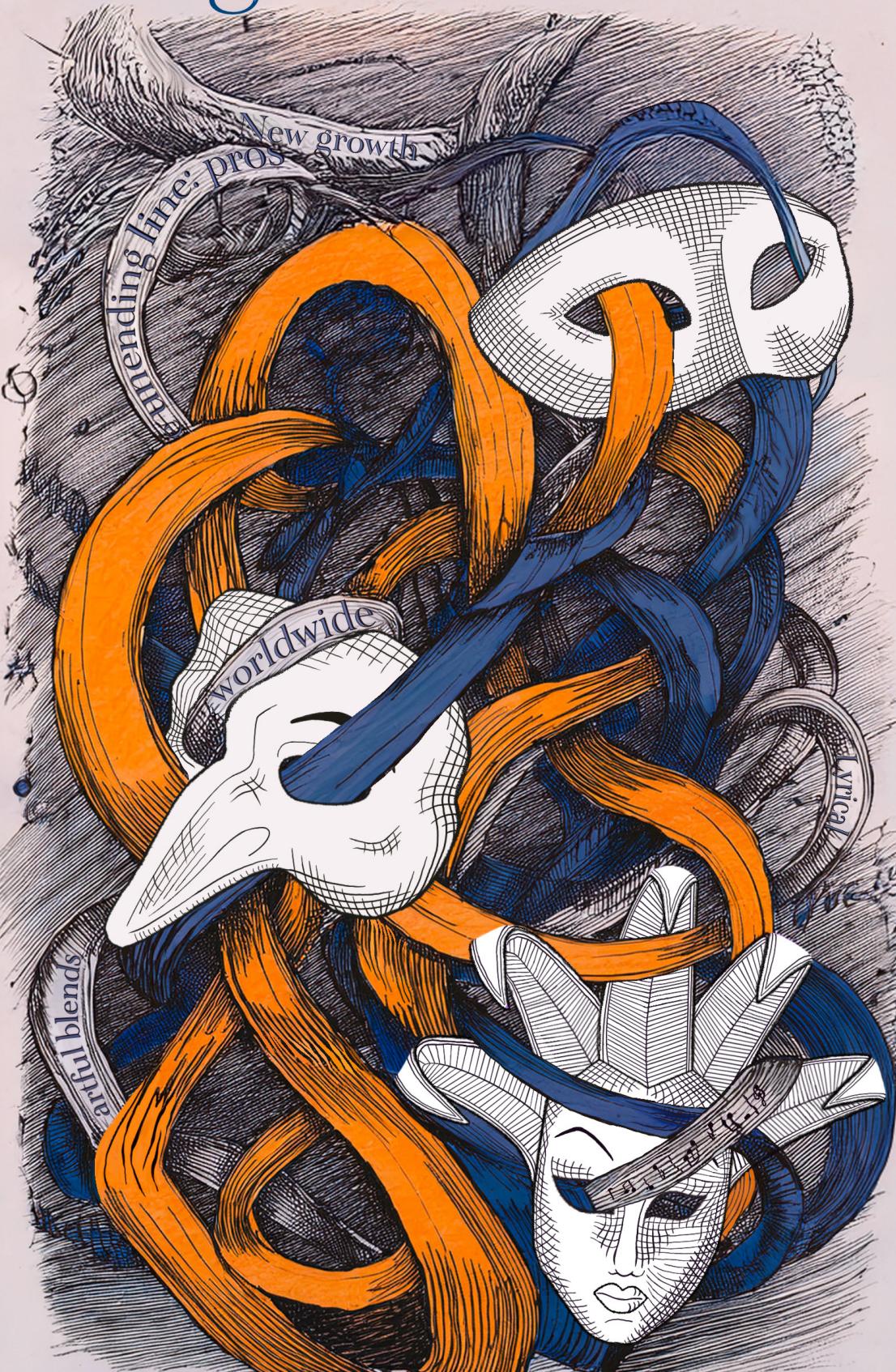


Melange: A Journal of

Fall 2025 The First Issue

Prose Poetry and the Arts



MASQUERADE

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Masthead

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Editorial: Invitation to the Masquerade

We are living in a moment burgeoning with amalgamations. From prose poems to multimedia art, from creative essays to multi-genre short stories, blended works of art and literature are becoming increasingly prominent. With the goal of sharing the rich history and promising future of these dynamic mixtures, *Melange: A Journal of Prose Poetry and the Arts* presents an array of musings that dwell at the crossroads of traditional categories.

What is a Melange?

A “melange” (sans accent) is a new critical term we use to refer to a work of art or literature that combines multiple forms, genres, and/or media. We anticipate that this word will prove useful, as it provides a way to refer to a vast, growing corpus of work succinctly and precisely. It is familiar to much of our readership, hence easy to remember, due to its resonance with “mélange,” which refers to a less specific, more general mixture. As a journal, *Melange* accepts creative melanges, essays on melanges, and melanges in translation.

Melanges are a marker of our times. They have always existed, but with the technological advances of the last few decades, they have become increasingly common. With myriad online tools and platforms, it is now easier to create works that combine verbal, visual, and/or auditory media. Quick access to a plethora of information about artistic styles, techniques, and history gives creative souls the knowledge they need to make unique fusions. Many stories, poems, songs, and more derive complexity by borrowing elements from multiple genres. With social media connecting people and communities internationally, works that mix multiple languages are also on the rise. If melanges do not already outnumber non-melanges, it is very probable that they eventually will.

Blend Statements

Melange: A Journal of Prose Poetry and the Arts is itself a melange, as it contains both critical and creative pieces, at times reading like a magazine and at times like a journal. We chose to call it a “journal” rather than a “magazine” because even our creative entries have a didactic dimension; we ask all our contributors to include brief 1-3 sentence explanations of why their melanges are melanges, or if applicable, why the subjects of their essays and translations are melanges.

These explanations, which we refer to as Blend Statements, make our journal unique by allowing us to create a living, evolving, practice-based, contemporary theory of genre. At a glance, we can see how active writers and artists bring myriad traditions and influences together in this moment of rapid change. The brevity and clarity of Blend Statements make it easy to compare and contrast various techniques, subjects, and compositional philosophies. In their Blend Statements, our contributors frequently cite their sources of inspiration, connecting their writing to established and emergent movements alike. They also reflect on the effects of blending various genres, forms, and media, and how it furthers the purpose of their melanges. On occasion, they approach Blend Statements creatively, offering answers that beg further questions and promise further adventures.

The greatest strength of Blend Statements is that they allow us to investigate various melanges without foisting any single, monolithic definition upon them. By virtue of having so many differing and occasionally contradictory statements, we avoid putting melanges in boxes and categorizing them anew. Each statement shows us a shining facet of a gem that can disappear or reappear with a slight change in perspective.

Blend Statements for Essays and Art

To our delight, many of our contributors decided to turn the Blend Statement into its own art form. Two of our scholars who wrote traditional academic essays produced thoughtful, eloquent answers to the question of why their topics qualify as melanges. Bhawna Vij Arora, who writes on the performative aspect of John Donne's poetry in both the Derridean and dramatic meanings of the word, delves into metaphor and rhyme when explaining how his poems refused to be "caged on the page, handcuffed in the metal rings of subgenres and genres." In her patent eloquence she personifies the poems, passionately describing their passion, how they "beseech the reader to be *the speaker*, to adjust the sails and trails of the spoken word to that of a dramatic and excitable performance." She teaches and experiences Donne in a multimedia way that affects the interpretation of the poetry itself and its ontology. Just as Arora figuratively translates between the written and the oral, Steven Strange writes about translation as a practice. He muses on how language can shapeshift into "poetry, prose, painting, sketching, sculpture, architecture, musical notation, mathematical and scientific formulas, and other endeavors," though his primary concern is language-to-language translation.

Two of our creative essayists engage with poetry in unique, meaningful ways. In clear, heartbreakingly beautiful free verse, Yumiko Nakama remembers the grief caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami of 2011. She finds that "creative essay writing accelerates the process of loss and recovery." Life continues along the shoreline, though Nakama's community will never be the same. While Nakama sustains her elegiac poetry throughout the essay, another contributor, Roya Reese, vacillates between poetry and prose. Her narrator goes on a Joycean adventure through Glasgow, in a stream of consciousness style that moves fluidly between literary and pop culture references, sights, thoughts, and memories. "When I found prose insufficient," writes Reese in her Blend Statement, "I wrote poetry." Like characters in a musical who "burst into song," she switches form whenever the mood strikes. We have also had the honor of publishing the work of Michael Bird, whose multimedia, visual-verbal creative essay recounts one of his many adventures as a journalist in Romania. Years ago, Bird spoke with locals about a conspiracy theory claiming that stray dogs were used during and shortly after the fall of Communism to control and suppress the human populace. He retells this story through words as well as black and white photographs, bringing to light a timeless allegory.

Our artists' Blend Statements showcase how they visually represent literary and historical themes. Ricardo Domínguez's collages "embody the poetic symbolism found in the works of Jorge Luis Borges." His reverse ekphrasis turns symbols into visual motifs, both responding to and elaborating upon concepts such as the passage of time, divine design, and the replication of the self into alter egos. While Domínguez sublimates the written to the visual, Alice Iriarte superimposes words onto an image. She creates a visual metaphor for the rise and fall of the Spanish Empire. Old Spanish words travel down a spear held by one of four allegorical kings supporting Columbus' tomb, and in a show of resilience, newer Spanish words of Arabic and Indigenous American origins rise and bloom above the metal filigree. Iriarte invents a name for this type of melange; she calls it an Embellishment, "a special type of collage with words that look like ornamentation."

The Masquerade Ball

Among the many kinds of melanges we received in the first issue, the most numerous were prose poems. Prose poetry is poetry written in prose. It is poetry that does not resemble poetry – poetry in disguise! But... how do we see through the disguise?

Recognizing prose poetry would, in theory, require an understanding of what qualifies as both poetry and prose. As every poet knows, asking the question “what is poetry?” is tantamount to opening a door to infinity; the possibilities are endless. Despite the best efforts of scholars to define it for over a century and a half (and much longer considering international prose poetry *avant la lettre*), prose poetry’s mask has remained firmly secured to its mysterious visage.

Over the years, prose poetry has come in many guises: pastels in prose, prosulas, rhapsodies, fantasy dictionary entries, prose sonnets, exams, Cubist prose poems, footnotes, prosems, conference programs, sketches, Romantic fragments, fancies, polyphonic prose, improvisations, and brochures, to name only a few. New subgenres of prose poetry are continuously making their debuts.

Approaching the prose poem involves stepping carefully, gingerly – maybe even dancing. French prose poet Paul Valéry compares poetry to dancing and prose to walking in his essay “Poetry and Abstract Thought” (223-224).¹ Anyone who wants to keep pace with a prose poem should be prepared to match its speed, to hurry up or slow down, to move in unexpected ways, and above all to be open-minded about trying new maneuvers. At the same, an appreciation of patterns can deepen an appreciation of the spontaneous. Re-reading, asking to go through the motions again, repeating the dance, noticing how the dance is similar to other dances, can build not only expertise, but a sustained fascination otherwise known as love.

Melange invites you to step up to prose poems and ask them to dance. You will get to admire every little detail of their masks up close – each bead, swatch of paint, abrasion, wire filigree, patch of glitter. Through the Blend Statements, you will see the meticulous thought that goes into so many wildly different designs. You may not come any closer to recognizing prose poetry in general, but you will learn about the many connotations “prose poetry” evokes in 2025.

Many Masks: Is It a Prose Poem?

To develop a deeper understanding of prose poetry, we asked our contributors to answer a deceptively simple question: Why is your work a prose poem? Like our Blend Statements, we gather definitions of prose poems – not for the sake of finding one that works, but to see the many masks prose poetry wears today.

Several of our contributors describe their prose poems as poetic narratives. For Oz Hardwick, “words put on the mask of story,” even as they “nonchalantly unpick the narrative threads.” His neo-surrealist memoirs at times borrow the surprise factor of Russel Edson’s fabulist prose poems, with a uniquely enchanting richness of imagery. Samantha Carr, too, writes that her prose poems deliberately try to subvert the expectations we have upon encountering prose – namely, to read a story. Carr asks us to reconsider whether we truly know bodies, languages, historical figures, and continents. Both Hardwick and Carr excel at defamiliarizing the quotidian, allowing us to take nothing for granted. Similarly, Erin Scorthorn writes a predominately narrative prose poem that tells a story by jumping back and forth in time. Her work is significantly longer than others in the journal, showcasing the overlap between prose poems and short stories. She justifies the poetic aspect by referencing the musicality and the technique of broken narrative, which involves shifts in both time and form.

Other contributors emphasize the poetic aspect of their work, explaining how prose poems can import

¹ Paul Valéry, “Poetry and Abstract Thought,” Trans. Charles Guenther, *The Kenyon Review*, vol. 16, no. 2, (1954): 223-224, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4333487>.

rhetorical conventions from more traditional poetry. Chase Klavon uses vivid imagery and a variety of sentence structures, while Chris DiPietro includes musical devices like alliteration, assonance, and rhyme – much like Amy Lowell’s polyphonic prose of the early 1900s. Michael May hides entire haikus in his prose paragraphs, and claims that “[t]he act of searching for a poem in a paragraph can make the paragraph a poem.” In doing so, he conceptualizes prose poetry not solely through qualities inherent in the writing, but through the readers’ actions. Melanges, more so than single-genre or single-medium compositions, make us think about our roles as readers, especially if we find ourselves trying to place them within a broader framework of established canons. Another contributor of ours, Fin Keegan, also offers a haiku. Instead of hiding it in a paragraph, like May, he situates it at the end of a prose paragraph – creating a Haibun, a Japanese poem popularized by Matsuo Basho in 1600s, which subsequently gained global renown, with writers like David Cobb and John Ashbery continuing the tradition in their countries.

Other contributors find that prose lends itself to a variety of genres not always associated with poetry. Jes Wittig and Sandy Feinstein incorporate academic writing into their prose poems. Wittig employs the scientific language of ecology to show invisible and visible connections, or kinships, between wildly different living beings, concepts, and times.² Feinstein, a professor specializing in Early Modern English literature at Penn State, expertly and poetically analyzes Chaucer’s “The Tale of Melibee.” Lastly, Tamsyn Chandler finds that the prose “form allows for a more instinctual mode of expression,” lending her the freedom to more easily combine poetic language and diary entries. For all these writers, prose poetry presents an opportunity to combine specific subgenres within prose and poetry.

Some of our contributors take the fusions even further, and combine their prose poems with different media altogether. Jasmine Parsons offers a prose poem and an image engaged in an ekphrastic dialogue. She believes that the image, which is a photo of a photo, thematically compliments her prose poem about memory. Sam Szanto also provides a unique visual layout for her prose poem, presenting it as a quiz. This quiz functions like a map; she poses a series of questions, and readers’ answers determine the direction in which they read. Ultimately, though, every path leads to the same conclusion: “You are a bad mother!” Through this innovative form, Szanto shows how mothers are so often blamed for things outside of their control in a society that normalizes the sacrifices they make.

In one of our most daring multimedia melanges, Timothy Dansdill embeds links to videos in his prose poems. The videos add “emphasis or irony” to his writing. Dansdill takes us up on our invitation to dance at this masquerade ball; like Valéry, Dansdill keeps in mind the dictum that “Prose walks; verse turns; poetry leaps.” He writes that he tries to make his prose poems feature all three – which he achieves with rhythms heard and unheard. While Dansdill is our only contributor to include videos, Paul Green describes his prose poetry with a cinematic metaphor: “[t]his prose poem is a slow steady tracking shot through the ruinous inscape of my brain without the rhetorical distractions of versification.” The steadiness of this shot manifests itself formally in a single, long, unbroken paragraph. A series of thoughts coalesce to map a mind, which itself is engaged in mapping a world through a creative cartography that takes into account the far past and far future, the true and the imaginary. With his excellent sense of humor, he notes that his automatic text is “probably” influenced by Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Breton, Eluard, Burroughs, Silliman, Bernstein, and Makin.

2 Two of our contributors, Jasmine Parsons and Michael May, are currently pursuing PhDs in Physics, though their prose poems in this issue do not relate to STEM. In general, the versatility of prose poetry lends itself to highly interdisciplinary fusions.

Opinions may differ on how to identify a prose poem, but until recently, many scholars have agreed that all prose poems lack line breaks. After sifting through countless prose poems to compile *The Penguin Book of the Prose Poem* (2018), Jeremy Noel-Tod finds he “can only offer the simplest common denominator: a prose poem is a poem without line breaks” (xix-xx).³ While this is a useful and often accurate way of identifying Modernist through Contemporary prose poetry, it privileges orthographic Germanic and Romance languages. Oral traditions and languages that do not display lines of text in the same way may not use visual layout as a reliable criterion. Our contributor Urvi Sharma writes a prose poem that “wears prose like a costume but breathes in metaphor.” On the page, she deliberately breaks the prose into fragments to mimic “the urgent stutters of earth” which needs our attention, protection, and activism now more than ever – not just in the Himalayas, but all over the world. Another contributor of ours, Rupert Loydell, accomplishes the seemingly impossible feat of writing lineated prose poetry through remixology. He gathers snippets of prose from various sources, only a few words in length, and arranges them in short lines. His text originates in prose and looks like poetry. What makes this technique especially fascinating in 2025 is that Loydell acts as the human equivalent of AI. Like AI, he creates something new from what is previously extant, but unlike AI, his agency and subjectivity are unquestionable. Comparisons between automatism, remixology, and AI poetry could be generative in the years to come.

Interestingly, an Anonymous Poet who uses a technique similar to Loydell’s for “*Dating Suite, Make it New*” classifies his work as a collage – not a prose poem. He combines Biblical quotations with imagined or altered responses to dating app prompts to create a hilarious fusion. Most of his source material is presumably in prose, but because he lays it out as poetry, he considers it more of a poem. This is the magic of *Melange*; we offer you the chance to learn about prose poetry without forcing a universally binding definition upon it. At this masquerade, everyone is allowed to dance in different directions. We cannot guarantee there will be no collisions. But if prose poems, or writers, or artists, or scholars, or even readers do happen to bump into each other... it could be the start of a beautiful relationship.

Sincerely, though, what is a prose poem? Perhaps the answer that resonates most with the many other statements we have received is one that approaches the matter with humor. In the words of Jodie Childers, “[t]his is a prose poem; forgive it, for it knows not what it does.”

Sylvia Onorato
Editor-in-Chief, 2024-2025
Founding President of *Melange*

“It has been an honor to contribute to the creation of *Melange*’s first issue as an editor. The editing team was able to tease out the multiplicity of interpretations and meanings found within each piece as we voted on them, and I loved hearing my colleagues’ thoughts on how the pieces presented their message. My experience as an editor gave me a new perspective on the writing and reading process as well, seeing the decisions each author made at such a high level regarding form (how their work constituted prose poetry), theme, and structure, among other aspects. I hope that our audience takes as much pleasure from diving into *Melange*’s works as we had editing them!”

~ Oliver Berke

3 Jeremy Noel-Tod, “Introduction: The Expansion of the Prose Poem,” *The Penguin Book of the Prose Poem: from Baudelaire to Anne Carson*, (Penguin Random House, 2018), xix-xx.

Prose Poems
and
Shorter Melanges

Shall We Gather at the River?

Invisible doors lead to invisible rooms, each textured like a moment of loss. A kiss on the nape of a white neck. An out-of-tune guitar. An old man stands at the foot of the stairs, as if it's a mountain with sheep scattered on scraggy fields like musical notation. I turn away from falling hair, from a chorus everyone knows but no one will sing. I take the old man's hand, which is hard and strong as a five-bar gate, and I lead him through an invisible door to a room that's been cleared for a hospital bed which, in this coarsely raked idea of light, looks like an altar, or a packing crate awaiting collection. Upon the altar, or in the crate, or under the bed, a man who surely can't be all that old defiantly cries at a war that ended fifteen years before I was born. Everything's invisible but I'm sure that the family's all here. My younger self offers me my eyes on a small plush cushion.

New Directions in Psychoanalysis

No stranger to the system, I accept each new procedure with a grain of salt, a shrug of the shoulders, and a short exhalation of belief. This time, the therapist lays me down on a faux leather couch and, rucking up her lab coat, straddles me as if I was a skittish horse. *What would Freud say?* we both laugh simultaneously. Neither of us speaks German, so any answer would be purely academic, but it breaks the ice and we're soon into the serious business. She slices me open – neat, so neat – from breast to belly, then lifts out a series of linen-bound birds. Each has a different song which, though beautiful in itself, contributes to a cacophony akin to the climactic soundtrack of a horror film from, say, 1960. *The year I was born*, I remark, and the therapist makes a note in her faux leather-bound notebook. *The Birds came later*, she says, though I'm not completely sure to what, precisely, she is referring. Then she sews me up – neat, so neat – dismounts and straightens her lab coat. I wipe the salt from my eye, shrug my shoulders, and inhale something that smells of antiseptic and mysticism. We sit at the Ouija board with a sparkling glass and a German-English Dictionary.

Treasure Trove and the Problem of Suburban Regeneration

The mysterious dead we dug from the garden all sit at the kitchen table. Here and there a femur or a humerus is missing, and a few are short of their full quota of ribs, but they wear their losses with equanimity, and each bony guest sports a ragged-toothed grin that says, all things considered, they're happy to be here. They are drinking tea from the cups I rarely use, for lack of visitors, and the scalding comfort just disappears, though I've a mop and bucket to hand, just in case. Likewise, most of them are smoking and, again, there's no signs within the skeletal cages which once cradled the machinery of life, though trails and rings appear with each otherwise imperceptible exhalation. I ask them their stories – how they came to be buried beneath the hydrangeas in a quiet suburban cul-de-sac – but they have no tongues to speak, and they shrug in unison, like so many pumpjacks on a luscious patch. I think they might be laughing, though before I can ask them to mime the cause of their mirth, I'm distracted by the pandemonium of blues and twos outside.

Blend Statement:

I'd say these poems are neo-surrealist memoir. They contain that memoirist urge of recounting lived experience (or experienced life), but with the surrealist acknowledgment that the "truth" (whatever that may mean) of it all can only be articulated in language that lurks deeper than, and pulls away from, the customary usage of words.

Are These Prose Poems?

These little boxes contain melodies which slide around the regular beat a little differently on each repetition, while the words put on the mask of story as they nonchalantly unpick the narrative threads. "The shape of thought," as Russell Edson put it, with all the bulbous edges lovingly squished into straight lines.

If Columbo was a Doctor

He'll wave his hand for you to sit, and you'll get the sense he already knows – but he'll ask why you came because he enjoys the game. You won't show the photographs saved in the folder optimistically titled health. Instead, you'll watch the ripples of his raincoat unfold as he retraces your steps, opens the door, and stands outside just long enough for you to feel the shift. It's a funny thing he'll say – opening and closing the door – stepping in and out of the room, through the portal you created. He'll mention a cold case where he found a killer through a tiny bruise on her palm, an Achenbach anti-alibi. You don't expect door handles to be dangerous, he'll say as he shows you the livid plum ooze on his index finger. You were right – he's seen your lacy red fragility. In the time it takes to open a door, you can kill – that's how quickly bradykinin dissolves; poof. Then how does he know, you'll wonder, but he'll be a step ahead. Around that little bruise, a laser traced gunpowder residue, fancy that, he'll say. And you'll notice the light inside the pearl globe of his right eye and understand.

Is This Your Pain?

The first physio disagrees with the second physio, and the third physio will only talk over the phone. The first says avoid high-impact exercise, avoid yoga, avoid your elbows, and STOP! The second recommends any exercise that feels comfortable – but are you sure you should be cycling with that balance? The third is diligent with exercise sheets and ignores the second physio's question – is this your pain?

Aware that cartography is impossible from inside the map. Don't take her there, insists a crackle on the line – but physio one is pressing her thumbs deep into the sacred-Iliad. This is what happens when you build bodies on ancient ruins, she doesn't say, but instead, tell me when the pain has released. Physio two traces the assemblage of joints from their starting point to their final resting place, but each time he tries to hold a patella, it bounces out of reach: wretched thing. And that is not the pain. I try to tell them that their temple does not teach this beauty because it is too dangerous.

But the Rheumatologist has joined three – this is insertional pain, as though this answers any of our questions. He asks if the rivers on the map run cold, and two points to tributaries, refracted blue by the silt of glacial erosion. The only thing they can agree on is to see me again in two weeks.

Learning Latin – Livedo Reticularis

Latin is a dead language, and therefore dangerous for beginners. Your first attempts are clumsy, but with practice, you summon its ghost. These return journeys exact a sacrifice – the ferryman demands to be paid. Coins take life out of the world; only pain can entice shadows back. You offer the colour blue – what use is having the sky when you can't summon wings? You realise too late this is only part payment. He has cast you into his net as mulberry circuits erupt in your skin. His command of Latin casts a spell that mottles your blood – its thick ooze unable to squeeze past your knees or snake down your calves as you try to remember a word, any word, to stop this. You must warm before this stagnation rises – remember something, anything from class – at first the past remains mute and reminds you only that have much learning to do. Then you remember *morus alba*, *morus celtidifolia*, *morus rubra* – you remember that your words are dangerous too as you turn his blue into red, purple and black – into delicious soft fruit – into a new flow.

Blend Statement:

This submission combines form and genre in that it combines medical knowledge with lived experience through the surrealism that the prose poem can contain. The expectation when we look at medical records is for prose that reflects the patient experience, answers questions, and provides solutions; however, in chronic illness, this is rarely the case.

Are These Prose Poems?

The expectation when first encountering a prose poem is for a narrative that will unfold and make sense, within our expectations of the sentence and the paragraph. These prose poems subvert those expectations to include multiple voices, or fragments, to create a new perspective.

La Cosecha



I took this photo in the Cathedral of Seville. The figure is an allegorical representation of the Spanish kingdom of León. With a spear he crushes a pomegranate, symbolizing the conquest of Granada ("granada" means "pomegranate" in Spanish). Upon his shoulders, he bears the tomb of Christopher Columbus.

This collage visually portrays the ways territorial expansion and colonization fundamentally changed the Spanish language. The "cosecha," or "harvest," that the viewer may reap in looking at this collage consists not only of land, crops, and wealth – but also of words.

The position of the words reflects the items in the image as well as the geography of Spain. Traveling down to Granada on the spear are the words of Pedro de Marcuello, who praised the monarchy for regaining the southern part of the peninsula. There is little difference between his words and the weapon on which they appear. Spilling from the puncture mark is a vicious legend – that upon facing exile, the last Sultan's mother castigated her son for losing the war, adding to his grief. Whether true or false, the existence of such a quote serves as a double blow.

Granada did not suffer in vain. The cultural exchanges that had taken place before its fall had laid the groundwork for a new language. On the ground, too, is a quote about a certain "tierra," a land of unfathomable size – which is none other than America, viewed by Columbus. The land Spain laid claim to would, with time, lay claim to the Spanish language itself. Growing from the ground, from the hem of the king's robe, are the words that make Spanish what it is today.

Arabic words rise and blossom into new granadas. Above them, a line from a poem by José Martí tells of a miraculous white rose that can blossom year round. The cultivation of language never ceases – nor does the cultivation of sympathy or forgiveness, which the rose symbolizes. His line adds a mote of hope to the collage, that the Spain of the future would be more hospitable.

North of this excerpt is a trail of shells, reminiscent of the holy symbol of Santiago de Compostela. On these shells are words for foods from across the ocean, from America. Above these I have invoked Antonio Machado's poem "caminante, no hay camino." Traveler, there is no path – no single correct pilgrimage route, no road across the sea, no predestined way to move forward in time. In every age, coexisting with other cultures, religions, and languages will bring its challenges, but it is up to us to create a new path we can walk together.

Translations:

1. Down the spear:

Siembra de una
lengua
ystoriado y ordenado
por la gloria

The planting of a
language
historified [antiquated spelling] and ordered
[Pedro de Marcuello's *Cancionero*, p. 45 v. 4]
for the glory

2. The spearhead:
Vuestras altezas Your graces
No pararés con Granada [How Columbus addresses the King and Queen of Spain]
do not stop with Granada
[Pedro de Marcuello, p. 163 v. 47]

3. The Pomegranate:
Llora como una mujer lo que no supiste defender como hombre
You cry like a woman for what you failed to protect as a man
[The final blow: a folk legend claims that Aixa, the last Nasrid Sultana in Spain, berates her son for losing control of Granada.]

4. Bottom hem of the robe:
gente y la tierra en tanta cantidad que yo no sé ya - escriba -
people and land in such quantity that I do not know yet - describe -
[Relación del primer viaje de D. Cristóbal Colón, transcribed by Bartolomé de las Casas, entry for December 24th]

5. Row of Pomegranates:
Azafrán, Lima, Azúcar, Acetuna, Sandía
Saffron, Lime, Sugar, Olive, Watermelon
[All are words derived from Arabic]

6. Ribbon above the row of pomegranates:
Cultivo una rosa blanca, en julio como en enero, cult- rosa-
I cultivate the white rose in July as in January, I cult- rose-
[José Martí, “Cultivo una rosa blanca,” *Versos sencillos*, 1891]

7. On the shells:
Cacao, elote, papa
Cacao, corn, potato
[All words are American crops.]

8. Above the shells:
Caminante, no hay camino sino estelas en la mar.
Traveler, there is no path but foam on the sea.
[Antonio Machado, “Caminante, no hay camino,” *Campos de Castilla*, 1912]

Blend Statement:

“La Cosecha” is what I call an Embellishment. It is a special type of collage with words that look like ornamentation.

Equinox

Morning rises alongside us, wanting to be desired, so we sit barefoot in the grass, let the wetness be. Fingers dig themselves into soil. Nails blackening, water lapping, the dawn. I am afraid of losing whichever moment this is. We do not speak. Silence fills the gaps between my teeth until the splash of a catfish cuts the air cold. Suddenly, we are fat with thought. Mosquitos feed from my swollen ankles and I let them. It is August when she tells me that she is afraid to die.

Night arrives too soon, wanting too to be desired, so we fold our bodies into an envelope addressed to God. I trace Hail Marys into her skin until they harden. Time continues without asking. In another world we are sitting again in wet grass, anywhere but here.

It is September when I watch my mother cry for the first time. We stall out in the parking lot of a convenience store and let the radio drone on. Neither of us are listening. We don't know who we are. And still, the light from a street lamp above shines only for us.

Blend Statement:

My creative submission combines genres as I aimed to write a poem but it ultimately ended up in prose. I utilized elements of both poetry and prose in my piece, as I didn't write entirely in complete sentences but still ended all of my phrases with punctuation.

Is This a Prose Poem?

My work is a prose poem because I combine the poetic language with the prosaic style. I utilize both incomplete and complete sentences while writing expressive, figurative images.

Unidentified Highway Phenomena

I find the open road the most free when it tries to hide from me. Those late night drives, real late. Past midnight, counting every green. Do you know what I mean? It's those deep night drives where visibility is just a dream because the fog clouds are tempting you with the hour. You feel lucky that it's cold because your windows are rolled up and you can listen to that song we call ours, else the midnight spectre would wrap around your head and lull you to sleep. But, the music you've picked out is on your side, during its shotgun ride, keeping you awake because without it, you'd have only the clock to confide in. There's not a soul in sight and the streets have said goodnight and it's so dark, but putting on the brights makes it harder to see and it looks like the road lines are being painted right in front of you; the street signs and stop lights are just blurry ammonite spirals hovering around nebulas. I know where to go although I glide below these colorful suns belonging to distant galaxies. You've seen them before, too? Gas station billboards, usually blue reminders of what we grew into, are somehow welcome because you can't see the buildings they are married to and you are suddenly more aware that everyone has their own story, but at the same time, less aware that they exist because you can't see the houses in this mist. Despite its apparent, inherent danger, I always think of that time as a halcyon shroud, riding in my own Apollo that cuts through the clouds.

Blend Statement:

“Unidentified Highway Phenomena” combines forms through the use of rhyme, defamiliarization, and grammatically incorrect sentence structure that is typically avoided in prose, but welcomed in poetry.

Is This a Prose Poem?

“Unidentified Highway Phenomena” disregards traditional prose expectations by emphasizing beats through rhyme, run-on sentences, and questioning the reader; a style typical of poetry. Conversely, the piece takes a Kerouac-like approach-- a ramble fitting of prose.

Pruned chrysanthemums

When breath becomes fog, becomes ice crystals hanging in open air, a swath of space reserved for iron stars and black holes; when voice traverses the sky between shattered places waiting for pruned chrysanthemums: the brown rays of a dead sun springing from frozen earth; and when the cereals are only seeds, painted sheets and tubes of stainless steel and plastic roofs on artificial homes bide their time along with anxious children. Jungle gyms wait for June and count the minutes until snowmelt drains from their surrounding spring-foam carpet. Rotators, spinners, and forts lie still and empty, asleep since autumn.

But the critters, awake, are bored by warm nests made months ago. Creatures, parents who hoped for rest, find the forest doesn't hold its breath in winter, when inaction becomes a chore—it chitters and yells and whispers and stares at new brown buds, a watched pot filled with ice and set to boil.

Blend Statement:

The prose poem I am submitting features a list as a primary structure. The elements of the list become like the lines of poem in their metrical weight. But unlike the lines of a poem, a list comes pre-baked in conversation with the sentences around it.

Is This a Prose Poem?

The nucleus of this prose poem was two haikus I embedded in sentences. Although bots can find haikus in any kind of writing, and the attention we give those accidental haikus gives them power, there is also a poetic power in the hidden haiku. The act of searching for a poem in paragraph can make the paragraph a poem.

Gone South

Together, the three sisters had seemed an unstable compound, overtalkers talking over one another, even on the in-breath, their voices rising in pitch and volume until (BANG!) one caught another's barb. Children of longwinded lovers – a lawyer quarreling caveats and a lecturer hooked on associations – was it that these three daughters, two of them twins, had really been one in some way? That this psycho-verbal murmuration rather than their children or their husbands was them at their most complete?

Their offspring quiet,
savouring the memory
of long-flown birdsong.

Blend Statement

The haibun is in itself of course a combinatory form, though there is more than prose + poetry to the amalgam: the title becomes more important, as does the typographical form.

Is This a Prose Poem?

As the editors noted,* a prose poem is a poem disguised as prose. In a haibun, the haiku portion might seem to give the game away, but in doing so only adds a further layer of camouflage.

The Psychogeography of Water

As a child's body pulled itself out of familial ritual and a personal love for the esoteric, its face grew thin and decided to look back on itself.

A consideration of what is real, whether it be the spread-out supernova of organs on the pavement below, blooming orchids running off the edge of the pavement. Or a young man with a passport, moving from boat to train and back again.

The lack of ritual and meaning in death soothed and disturbed my multiple selves in equal measure. Only absolution was handed to me in a bowl of water. Looking in, I thought of the similarities between a violent removal and the refusal to participate, then remembered floating down the river on our backs singing to the silver bending low, in the times when we would swing off the branches of trees and wheels of transport in succulent America!

In infancy, I leapt like a wild fauve in the womb. I was the end of gender. Upon emergence, I painted my face blue and observed the immediate environment. Despite various setbacks, nothing restricted me, instead I just covered the aching skeleton with the blanket of Berlin in times of need. The blanket being not of fabric but of snow, covering the earth in preparation for rebirth.

Yet it still hurt that I was alone as I lay sweating, weak, on a hillside neath Tor, my wet head placed on the cold grass outside. Looking upwards in the midst of fever I saw three corners. The holy grail on the hill, the temporary metropolis, leering multicoloured from afar, and your eye. Your single eye. Above it all, watching, unblinking the scenes surrounding. But I was to succeed you. Always watching, always in the doorway, then onwards, away like Pisanello's hare, running through the constellational forests at dusk.

Obsessed with the cultivation of 'T' it is hard to tear away from the idea that all messiahs are heavy with sorrow and their solitary natures. But all the same it would be acceptable to be drowned in golden firmament or acrylic, without a name.

In moments of oracular sight, I see myself in motion underneath the water, and when I climb out of the pool, all the people surrounding seem as though they are rapidly fluttering line drawings. Both images are two sides of a dichotomy, breaking through the mundane and revealing themselves unto me at any given moment.

But when the time comes, soon, perhaps I shall chase the sun with smog no longer locking me from heaven, the trees in rows like torches. And though once I became sick of the pastoral, I sometimes wonder; is this the true perspective? Nothing but sky above and blue waters rolling out in front of me forever and forever? And night music, chasing the waves down from sea to land and up to the stars again, forcing their movement through relentless beating?

Treatment Proposal

Aerial shot of broken leg and dogwood magnolias
Close up on a mouth, a bloodshot eye in a YMCA bathroom
Kohl under the fingernails
Dirty water from the sink, scrubbing a mark off a wrist
Crane shot seen reflected coming out the toilet stand
Girl turns shocked, the actress or the character
Not sure
Leather pumps with scratches disappear into the dark

Guy covering his chest with shaving cream
Brushes his teeth
Spits out blood
Watches himself in the mirror
Ambiguous mood

Dailies
Meta
Unedited footage
Guy is sat on the garden wall
Stock character yearns for something
Crossfade
Music from the car passing by
He's waiting for someone

Fade in
Fade out
Woman passed out on her bed
Watches a car crash from the window
Guy falls
She smiles
Tears dry
Close up on her bleeding teeth
Espresso martini
Yellow light
Dark comedy
Hands passing money
Rings spinning on the table
Mahogany
Pocket knives
Licked
And sealing envelopes.
Controversy over strong language.

Visual References for an East End Vampire

Two Teddy Boys stood in mirrored hallway descending nightclub stairs

Black velvet ribbons, baby face, horn of plenty brylcreem hairstyle,
would suit a bolero tie.

Emerging reflections of people in mirrors behind.

‘Midnight vigil for Highgate Vampire!’

Local paper headline.

All in black holding wooden crosses, heroic pose, entering the family tomb.

Ivy covered vaults. Story by Barry Simmons.

Mist covering Abney Cemetery. Get permission to film.

Angel standing over with granite hand on granite heart.

Notice to CD, hire twenty Northern Soul Dancers.

Authentic dress, polos etc.

Primary camera focus on girl 20-30, silver dress and white tights.

Can supply dark wig and eyeliner. Bring Mary Janes, preferably patent.

Must be energetic,

ideally with training in contemporary or modern dance.

Blend Statement:

The first is a prose poem, and the last two are poems that play on the form of a series of notes, in the context of film scripts and treatments. They seek to combine cinematic language with poetry, as well as the idea of larger concepts being contained within one brief image or bullet point in the margins.

Are Any of These Prose Poems?

Yes, The Psychogeography of Water is a prose poem. I’d say this form allows for a more instinctual mode of expression, one that mirrors how the piece was written, at a time when I was just beginning to explore poetic language and found the openness of the prose poem form less intimidating than lineated verse. It gave me permission to experiment, and to blend diary entries and poetic language.

Preface

The poem I wrote, as part of a sabbatical project, Chaucer and Me, responds to the Tale of Melibee as well as to past scholarship and criticism of it—what was addressed and what wasn’t. Chaucer’s tale begins with the action—rather cinematic in the modern sense—that I don’t introduce until the penultimate stanza/paragraph of my poem. The rest of the Tale is an argument, or polemic, partly about honour, as manifested by revenge understood as war or law, which Chaucer represents in his description of the Knight; and Christian mercy or forgiveness, which might be seen as reflected in the first estate by the Clerk and his Tale. The names of the wife and daughter, Prudence and Sophie, reflect what underpin mercy.

The Tale of Melibee: How the Poet Speaks?

Why climb the high points of every state, of every range anywhere?

The hiker, too tired to think ahead often just exhales,
“because it’s there,” and if you ask a poet what took him—or her—to thinner air
beyond the Himalayas he may say much the same, or put you off, or she may tell you
what you want to hear: the challenge, moral imperative, it’s the character, it’s what came out,
though I started with ____ and expected ____.

Page flip to the past, and you’ll be told what poets had to say, the need to know, the must explain.

Would Chaucer say Melibee was his riposte to the presumptuous host, that is, to any reader?
Did he make Prudence as a foil to thumping, bumping silly elf romancers for parishioners
over pleasure seeking courtly petitioners?

You think writers translate and remake line after line just to pontificate,
say war is bad, and men too quick to violence? Poet’s words as political swords? Or
ploughshares?

Melibee and marriage are mountains to be mastered.

The rocky paths take their necessary turns, a little damp with April rain anticipating green
and twenty-nine varied folk, and what they’d say, and how they’d say it, a sheaf of tales,
a prompt to *write wrytt writon*

All the poet’s, all his reading, Book of Consolation and Counsel, Remedy of Love,
chapter and verse, too, of course, Prudence cites. Why not then take her for his own?

Lesson one to writers: readers will decide what you mean
even as you think, this might be fun, or interesting,
to make a woman like a man, or make more than simple binaries
like women are and should; men are and do.

Still, for me, it's what came out, maybe willed, maybe not, inevitably
uncertainties, resentments, frustrations, hate,
less the victimized--the way it is and has always been.

So here's one other: a man's foes attack wife and daughter arbitrarily. They've kept watch, see they are alone. Melibee isn't working, gone to war; he's off to play in the fields—sloth? irresponsibility? to hunt? to escape? Determined enemies of him or them, ready with ladders, climb the walls, note nothing, take nothing but beat the wife and daughter, Prudence, Sophie. What's so medieval? The names that have been chosen—honey for a man, wisdom that he's bred, discretion that he's wed? That there must be a moral to every story?

Here's a thought-exercise, a *compilatio* of what men do to women, and, less often and less true, what women sometimes get to say and sometimes do, not what was called abuse, law enforced - history all the same, whether and how now misread, dismissed, as little dialogic allegory.

Blend Statement:

The poem responds to Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, probing them in light of questions and issues in our own time. In short, it embeds commentary as, and in, prose-poetry. By contrast, the Tale of Melibee is a prose narrative.

Is This a Prose Poem?

The submitted work is a prose poem. The lining, "paragraphing" or appearance, resembles prose; the use of questions may also be more conventional in scholarly prose arguments. The elisions, sound as meaning, use of rhythmic repetition, and metaphors as well as other figures, are conventions historically characteristic of poetry.

Idioms of Kinship

Ecology means relationships and relationships mean tension

I'm just about as hot and delusional as I can be at this moment, so I'll raise you a few more: Thunder is the voice of an angry god, and lightning his avenging missile. A mountain cave is the home of a great demon. Mycorrhizal networks sing the news through ancient songs.

'In' and 'out' are out. Along is in. In is the same as out, and while the universe is finite, willpower is not. You can't dip a wine glass in the ocean and say you have the ocean. Nothing is world-ending until we are full of days.

Another story means another day of holding up the sky. Another day means another old god closing the door, leaving you alone.

When you wish upon a star for true love, 3000 years from now two cockroaches pause briefly before passing each other by.

Rivers are in comas, polar bears are growing dolphin blowholes, and credit card culture requires six earths. A friend in the hand is worth two in the Cloud, but the two in the Cloud are worth much more than nothing. Meanwhile, the mycelia are gossiping about your buy-one-get-one habit. When you've lost two worlds, you might gain one earth.

Everyone's wrong because the world is a magic mirror. The menagerie of images is a menagerie of self-images: reality is a cosmic cascade of mirrors. Extending personhood means extending humility by precisely the same amount. We mustn't win, but we cannot lose, because the earth is right, and you are that, too.

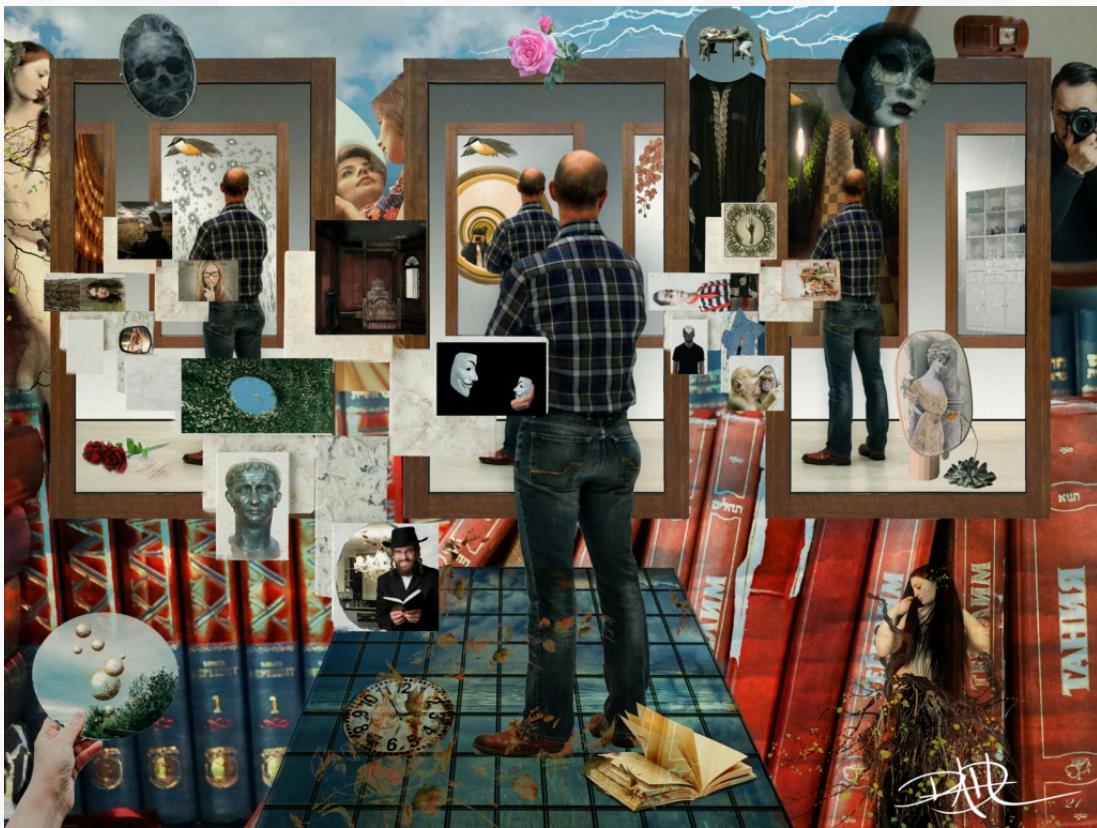
Blend Statement:

This prose poem has "science" in it, but only insofar as there are mycelia and facts about what they're doing down there. It has "fiction," but only insofar as mythologies are categorized as metaphors. It combines Super with Natural, which are secretly never separate in the first place.

Is This a Prose Poem?

The poem is prose in that it is written in the voice and cadence of my academic work. And, while its content bears some resemblance to my academic work, the list of claims don't move like a flow chart of well-researched arguments, but rather they hold resonance with one another. If ecology is about the visible and invisible relationships between living things, poems can be dispatches from an imaginal ecology.

Mirrors



In the work entitled “Mirrors,” which draws inspiration from Jorge Luis Borges’s poem of the same name, I explore Borges’s profound fascination with mirrors and the potential for self-replication across infinite scenarios. This concept is illustrated through images of mirrors reflecting other individuals and the notion of alternate existences on different existential planes, thereby allowing for the eternalization of oneself within a multiplicity of parallel lives. I personally subscribe to the idea that one might perceive their possible existences across various parallel universes. It is conceivable that only Borges perceives his alternate “self,” a mere doppelgänger, representing not the original but rather an embodiment of what he aspired to be yet is not—symbolized by the image of a bald man gazing at his own reflection in another mirror. In my interpretation of the poem, the figure of God is represented by the photograph captured in a separate mirror, which has the capacity to evoke nocturnal scenes replete with fantasies and double exposure scenes. This imagery serves to remind humanity of its insignificance, suggesting that individuals are ultimately reflections of mere vanity—perhaps even the vanity of God—an idea that should evoke a sense of trepidation. Let us now examine the conclusion of the poem:

“God has created nights well-populated
with dreams, crowded with mirror images,
so that man may feel that he is nothing more
than vain reflection. That’s what frightens us.” (translated by Alastair Reid)

It is imperative to conclude this discourse by acknowledging the pictographic representation of the rabbis, who read from right to left, as well as the ambiguous rose, which symbolizes the stages of existence and the passage of time.

Chess



In the work entitled “Chess,” based on the poem “Chess” by Jorge Luis Borges, I depict two chess players who are simultaneously entertained and consumed by the passage of time, as symbolized by a bird feather, a clock, the players’ advancing age, and a woman striving to reach the surface of a body of water. This scene unfolds on a chessboard occupied by two opposing armies that harbor animosity towards one another. The work illustrates Borges’ symbolism regarding the relationship between animate subjects (the players) and the inanimate subject (the board). Additionally, it explores the interaction between inanimate objects (the chess pieces) and the players (animate entities whose actions are suspended until dawn). The contrasting colors of the pieces further symbolize the perpetual conflict inherent in human warfare, suggesting an infinite struggle. One could assert that, much like the players maneuver the pieces on the board, there exists a divine force that orchestrates the existence of living beings on Earth.

Blend Statement:

My artistic endeavors seek to embody the poetic symbolism found in the works of Jorge Luis Borges. This is evident in the futile reflections of individuals as they are cast in the mirrors of existence, as well as in the intricate dynamics of human life represented on a chessboard. Here, one can observe the conflict of human destiny and the enigmatic nature of life.

FREEDOM OF ENTRY AND EXIT

Every summer contains within it every summer that has been, nestled within one another like nesting dolls. There comes a point where you've smelled every flower you'll ever smell, heard every birdsong. Every sensation piled upon itself like colored filters until reaching saturation. The memories resonate, the system overheats.

In other words, I'm a child again. The sun beats down from a cardboard-blue sky. Eyes squint. I try to lay my forearms down on the picnic table, but the scalding metal frame pierces through layers of thermoplastic and sears my skin. The bench will leave criss-cross marks on my bare thighs but I don't know that yet. That will happen later. I close my eyes but the sun insists on being let in, yellowing my vision like rotting teeth.

Please don't make me watch. I want to circle around you, like a vulture, a safe height away, never looking directly down. Hover in my peripheral vision for a bit. Maybe once dusk comes you'll just fade into the background.

After all, every night brings with it the promise of renewal. Sunlight freezes in motion; everything in stark contrast to one another, bodies made rigid and distinct. In darkness the edges between selves blur. And in the safety of this darkness, I come across the steady silent stream, flowing both directions, never eroding or twisting. I rest the tips of my fingers on its surface, forming ripples on the water, shuddering the dull light of the moon. For a brief moment, I can almost see you, reflected, having arrived here to stare back at me, surfaced and gleaming in the wet. But I form only faint brushstrokes of light that fail to coalesce into anything human.

In prophecy the future is so certain that it is functionally the past. It's really best, in the end, to just surrender. And so as the first sickly rays of dawn begin their gentle descent against my eyelids, I reach up from my bed, half in-world and half out-, and draw the curtain shut. A prayer for a few more moments of respite.



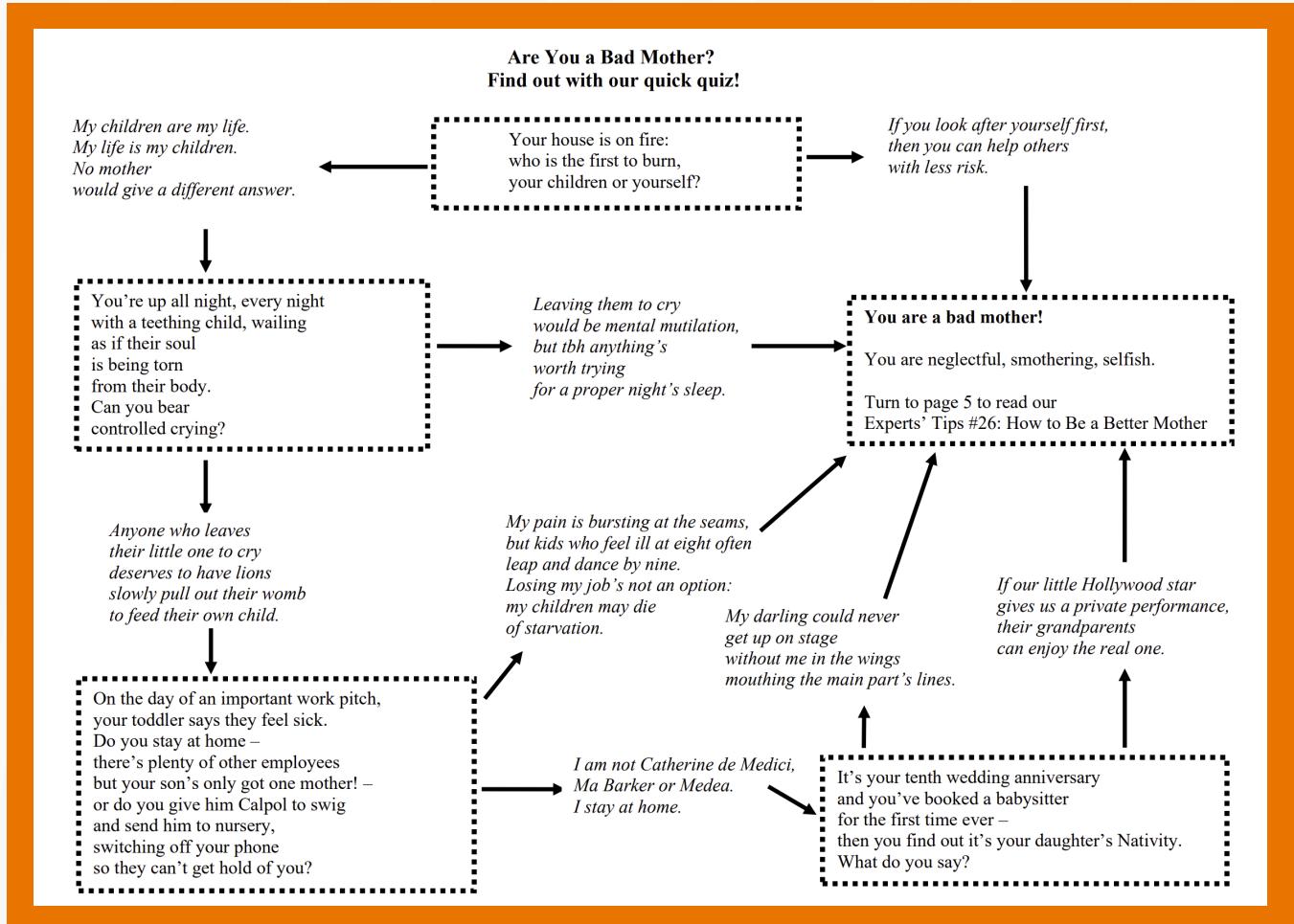
Is This a Prose Poem?

This work is a prose poem because it hides poetic meaning beneath a narrative-driven writing style most common in works of fiction.

Blend Statement:

Beyond being a prose poem, which inherently combines genres, I decided to include an image of a power pole I took in California many summers ago. The photo was originally taken on a disposable camera and printed out, so this photo is actually a photo of a photo, which complements the themes of the poem well. When I think of authors I love who mix media, my mind immediately goes to W. G. Sebald, who often included photos without context in his work to accentuate the vividness of his writing.

“Are You a Bad Mother?”



Blend Statement:

My creative submission is a poem in the form of a quiz.

Is This a Prose Poem?

It could be defined as a non-conventional prose poem.

Uncle Mad Mud

His central gift was graceful aggression. When pushed to violence he was courteous. In life—or death—situations he killed, yes, but with that special kind of kindness animal doctors bring when “putting down” a family pet—misery done, gone. He cleared justifiable homicide—twice. He never beat his wife, whipped his children. His tongue so sharp, his wit so quick, he’d flick a well-deserved riposte like a switch blade as everyone watched some tipsy rich man guffaw, unaware his dignity was slit, his polished stupidity bleeding out into the silk lap of his shocked trophy wife. He showed me simple means of self-defense. Save your fists, he said. Back away and kick. He warned me to never carry a gun. If outnumbered, he laughed and said: Just run. He never raised his voice, but could whisper on the smoke that cut across a bar room or a board room as all talking heads turned staring into that befuddled distance where ghosts gather and memories retreat. Pull ups, pushups, crunches, jump rope, he said you must do every day, throughout your day, on time with the same devotion of an atheist who must pray. And instead of that gun, carry a pen in a notebook slim against your strong heart or let one hide and ride against your butt. And write whatever comes to mind, but write goddamn—never stop writing, or you’ll stop breathing. I loved him more than I loved my father. When I helped carry him, wrapped in black gauze to a bon fire we built by a lost river, I swore to my brothers on the mushrooms we shared that he was moving, that death made a mistake—that we must unwrap him, let his skin return light’s kindness. So on we sobbed, laughing as we shouted one...as we swung him...two...three! free into his flames, but he did not move as we watched him burn, watched his black gauze curl and turn orange—his flesh frame, his scaffold bones, his melting face amidst the logs collapsing black yet building back to the embers silent by a dying fire place. We topped him off with his hundred note books at his request, watched all of his pages inspire the last of the fire, curl, quiver, roll gray down the pile like ocean breakers. Come dawn, drunk, we snuffed him out, shoveled his strong cement, wheel barrowed his mad mud to the river.

This Golden Gate

Were I an Oakland boy, I'd cross that bay to make a San Francisco girl my own, but I'm no boy—our golden youth fifty years back and a bridge between us closed or just too love-damned to walk across—besides, she's no California girl; she's just far west of where we started, yet surprised at a reunion fifty years forward, a-sway with me on that bridge nearly naked, about to become underwater lovers, one kiss sharing one breath, our legs tentacled, treading the surface, air and moon all the same, one gasp of laughter still sexual after so many drowning dives, we are convinced that any one not us might say *how pure* to see us dancing close, coast to coast, beyond our age. Even still, as we pursued a past that night, as if we might run it down and use it for food somehow—a repast. Some reunion watchers saw us as a Golden Gate over waters no one should dare to swim. Not because no one ever fell, or found no one else as insecure and liable to die as two teenagers do wandering ever after their adult selves, but only because reunions deny one beautiful you—two identities plunged and condensed into a star as anonymous and distant as adolescence, when after fifty years of forgetting, we're once again mates to end all mating between a West Coast girl seeking the sweet water denied her in her drought and fire and an East coast boy locked up cynical in snow. Oh but all that Midwest of memory in-between! Our after lives never would know how we lit a screen—a brief summer film no one watched: This Golden Gate—not any of these reunion bridge players—these lost old lovers won't leap like we did just for a laugh. So let's name them Derangels—wingless need-demons who see in clouds the summons of desire upside down, white caps whirling up regrets like sea birds frantic feeding on chum who attack their hearts inside cars stalled and lost on the golden gate—unlike us, a nation's love between us, we crossed we crossed.

This Wind

If I could tell you how long I've loved you, I would speak then as a man who is dead, but not in some grave tone, not a man deprived of his time left alive in you, but as one whose entire demise tried to leave you as we were: children turning into leaves on bare trees, or fledglings forced from nests made of laughter's castaways — tittering twigs, buds blown into smiles. If I could sing you how long I've loved you, then that song would summon not only dawn light, but those private parts of clouds—thigh lit as they spread the ever news of lost birds late to the party cats can only dream of at dusk, lying so low in grass unmown the first fire flies cry above them like jets blinking vapor trails echoing blade to blade. And if I could love how much I loved you then, then that love would bring us back home alive like bounty hunters who trail each other ghost to ghost, and kill them to set them free from justice, knowing no one's needed before the law of who was most wanted, and when last seen again, never tried for crimes against memory when what might have been proved lovely... the wind, this wind — the one we let go, blowing for us, not through us — if only not alone, if only not lonely, if only we'd said so.

Blend Statement:

My process for writing “prose poetry” very often involves an initial composing of linked haiku, which I then merge into prose blocks.

I add some very few hyperlinked images or brief videos or voice recordings for emphasis or irony.

Are These Prose Poems?

I often remind myself of this dictum: “Prose walks; verse turns; poetry leaps.” I aim to make prose poems that feature all three. My prose poems are most often factual, personal, but never confessional — provocative, but never (I hope) bombastic.

A MAP OF ABANDONED STRATEGIES, POSSIBLE OUTCOMES AND LOST CAUSES

All across the Matrix, the Mappa Mundi keeps us enchain'd. I refer to the demonic tyranny of the possessive, all citizens to be possessed by a block of air encased in broken bricks, that whole system of soiled values, a surfeit of nudge-money in brown envelopes swirling over the blazing barricades, that were abandoned at first light, more flying than fighting... So we stagger through the tangled mess of last night, the last night on Space Ship Fat Earth Mother, all piled up, a mosh pit of humanoids astride their drones. Do we need the hammer of the witches, the sickle of the warlocks? Christ might whispering in our wing-pits but now Lady Babalon does her hot blood routine with the pink smoke and mirrors. We have abandoned our rest rooms, our panic rooms, our living rooms, the stone rooms in the Bloody Tower. Various electronic signals tell us about ghostly collectives of huge bloody events going on which will be coming very soon to a town near you. All sorts of people are on display and we're all expected to celebrate. History has piled up and is stacked against us. Now our out-comings are ingrowing but our strategies remain as grand as an abandoned hotel on Mars. Our memories are being recalled like defective hatchbacks. We have lost our cores of ice with their frosted relics , our cores of molten iron slurping around at the centre of our little worlds, we've lost the core of the actual apple gnawed by the First Lady in the Garden Centre of Eden Bible Park, it was lost in dark matter transmissions, we've lost our core valuables, like our strategic weapons, all those plutonium cores lost in dark matter transmissions. We are cardboard boxes in the rain. We have mislaid the planet. Its music follows us like a lost cat. How's that for a meme? An alien snatch squad will unzip all the codes, all the little molecules of protein, so that you will shift your shapes. At least that's official paranoia, that you're made up of unsafe words, the overspill of a writers' room. But we all need to be cheered and the cheers will be calibrated. We are in the state of all possible states, we are mapping all nervous systems, all the twinkling night lights on the dark side of the brain, all those vibrant routes in and out of the body, the comings and the goings, all the zeroes and all the ones, it's a road map to total strategic superiority in a Lost World scenario. All gone: green blips on black gloss screens, flashes of nylon and a flare of stars, our possibilities lapsed, collapsed into a time-cone. The nebulae exude hot worms, darkness follows darkness. It is the Long Night of the Quantum Brothers once more.

Blend Statement:

The text is probably influenced by: the prose poem form as conceived in C19 by Baudelaire, Rimbaud: the techniques of automatism developed by the Surrealists, notably Breton & Eluard's Magnetic Fields (1919); the cut-up techniques used by William S. Burroughs, notably in Nova Express (1964); constructivist approaches to writing as expounded by Ron Silliman, Charles Bernstein and others in The American Tree (1985); post-narrative approaches to writing explored by the UK writer Richard Makin e.g in Work (2022). The piece was originally written for Jeremy Welsh, video and digital media artist, who wanted a piece to be read aloud at the launch of his 2025 exhibition 'A Map of Abandoned Strategies' in Bergen, Norway.

Is This a Prose Poem?

This prose poem is a slow steady tracking shot through the ruinous inscape of my brain without the rhetorical distractions of versification.

My God, She has a Voice!

Are you a modern-day hermit,
who dreams about moving to the Himalayas
to find the silence of God?

Then listen, your search for silence will interfere with your search for God.
Because the Himalayas are too noisy.

There are knats who buzz,
lambs who fuss,
eagles who sing,
swallows who twitter,
leaves that rustle,
thunder that cackles,
rivers that roar,
snow that whispers.

Saints meditating in
silent embrace of the Himalayas
is a lie
wholesaled and procured
for centuries.

There is no silence in the Himalayas,
Only sounds you can hear with your ears,
Sounds you can taste on your lips,
Sounds that quieten you,
Sounds that confound your
divine vision
of heavens above.

If you want silence,
don't go to Himalayas.
Go to a concrete room instead;
with double glazed insulated walls,
with no breath, no window,
where the echoes do not return,
where the ceilings do not speak,
and a hollow silence lingers with a still shriek.

Now while you are at it,
make a choice.
Between silence and God.

**Because My God,
She has a voice.**
And She is fuming
at the quiet burning
of Her forests, Her rivers,
Her deer, Her hills...
And unless we raise Our voice,
She refuses to turn on the water cannons.

(Silence is the tyrant's friend.
So, raise your voice, march and stomp, resist.
You are the water.)

Blend Statement:

While rooted in a spiritual framework, my poem fluidly traverses genres and themes drawn from ecocriticism, feminism, protest and the complexities of life itself. Through this layered generic interplay of form and meaning, the poem summons us to reconnect with the Earth before it's too late. Now is the time to embrace our responsibility, to act not from fear, but from reverence.

Is This a Prose Poem?

This is a prose poem because it wears prose like a costume but breathes in metaphor. The line breaks are deliberate, just like the urgent stutters of earth, human and poet alike. It spirals and digresses in true Tristram Shandy fashion, one cycle thought spinning into another to keep the story clanking forward.

BEAUTIFULLY FROZEN STARLIGHT COLLAGE

'But poems aren't made out of experiences, or out of thoughts, ideas, or musings about anything. Poems are made out of words.'

– Inger Christensen, 'It's All Words'

It is well within our rights to replace words with ours, is not illegal to use others' work to create texts from existing language and documents. One consequence of any backlash is lazy critical practices that generate doomsday hysteria, space between audience and artist.

Extraordinary music was a mining village digging for ideas and a sense of strictly enforced gender roles. We were boring down into the earth, enacting multidisciplinary art practices within leading museum collections, attempting to intervene in your head, a huge room filled with something very joyous.

Workers are vulnerable, often seen in streets and record shops in the back streets of Birmingham, Stoke-on-Trent and Glasgow. The iron-headed woman is from a well-known galaxy, can be seen naked tonight in the eye of any amateur scientist. Astronomers created ultimate form, way back in time, even in places they

considered unusual, inspired by niche battleground encounters between creative and technical rivals. The secret of dark matter, seen through telescopes of desire, turns out to be a gig by a man taking a shortcut home through warped space. Aggression and tension festering between associates means that light will bend

its way around large objects in space, giving extra resonance to bodybuilding activities, whereas image is usually intuitive. Few other artists wield augmented friendships or make use of a scalpel so effectively. The dazzling image shows a glimpse of our world beautifully frozen within a perfect circle of light.

© Rupert M Loydell

Blend Statement:

This prose poem is a work of remixology, a subject I have taught. My work is original, as it alters source material beyond recognition, "mining" only a few words from each location.

Is it a Prose Poem?

This is an assemblage of prose, fashioned into a poem, an accumulation of found, edited, remade material, collaged, edited and repurposed into a poetic form.

*Dating Suite,
Make it New*

I. Ancient Hinge

And the LORD said

I am the Almighty GOD; walk before me, and be thou perfect.
To me, relaxation *is*
Trip to the beach and a hike in nature.

And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.

And Jonathan said

Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings.

And he said unto David

I go crazy for
Cooking good food with good tunes and good people

Why built ye not me an house of cedar?

My simple pleasures
Are to use soft serve as the dipping sauce for fries hehe

And David said unto Jonathan

Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage

I go crazy for
Dessert au chocolat

But see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened because I tasted a little bit of this honey.

And

The way to win me over is
To make me laugh.

And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed

And the LORD said

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing

Therefore

buy a vintage cabriolet car and travel throughout little villages of Italy,
eating pizza, pasta, and drinking wine

—choose life, that you may live.

II. Intermede, by Joseph Hall⁴

Great is the folly of a feeble braine,
Ore-ruld with love, and tyrannous disdaine:
For love, how-ever in the basest brest
It breeds high thoughts that feede the fancy best,
Yet is he blinde, and leades poor fooles awri,
While they hang gazing on *tinder profiles*.

III. Matthew in Love

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.
Matthew, 16:25

And whosoever will try secure their love shall lose it: and whosoever will not care about their love shall find it.

For what is a person profited, if they shall gain love, and lose their own self? Or what shall a person give in exchange for their own success?

And whosoever will text their love shall not get a response: and whosoever will not text their love shall be texted by them.

For many be called, but few chosen: check out my IG.
And let your profile so shine before men and women, that they may see how hot you are, and glorify your body which *is* on the beach.

And whosoever will go too fast with their love shall lose it: and whosoever will take it slow with their love shall find it.

Be ye therefore perfect, even as influencers which *are* on IG are perfect.

4 Apart from “*tinder profiles*,” the following text is from Book 1, Satire 7 of Joseph Hall’s *Virgidemiarum* (1597-1602).

And whosoever will only think of their love shall lose it: and whosoever will focus on themselves and their happiness and their career and their success and their own wellbeing shall find their love.

Therefore take no thought, saying, What does she think of me? or, Does he really love me? or, Whereto are we going together?

For your love knoweth that ye are freaking out about these things.

But seek ye first the kingdom of Yourself, and his success; and all these things shall be added unto you.

And whosoever will want to spend all their time with their love shall lose it: and whosoever will not have time for their love shall find it.

For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, and knew not until the flood came, and took them away; so it shall also be with your love.

And whosoever will save their love shall lose it; and whosoever will lose their love for their own sake shall find it.

For the stone which was at hand, the same did the builders reject; and the stone which the builders could not reach, the same is become the head of the corner: this is Love's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

You are alone alway, *even* with your love, *even* on your Iphone—*even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

Blend Statement:

For its first part, I randomly picked verses from the Old Testament and responses that users made to the dating app Hinge “prompts” (as you may know, on Hinge a profile is built out of photos and such answers to pre-set questions; I just went through a vast number of profiles, picked some recurring answers, and made my own version of them so they cannot be identified as being written by a particular person)—and then I interwove them so that some kind of narrative would emerge. The last part is a succession of variations on a couple of verses from the Gospel according to Matthew, adapting them to the dating spirit of the age. The second part, an intermede, is just a funny and superficial illustration of the point I made above; it consists in just a few lines from a 17th century poem which I only amended at the very end (in italics).

About Us

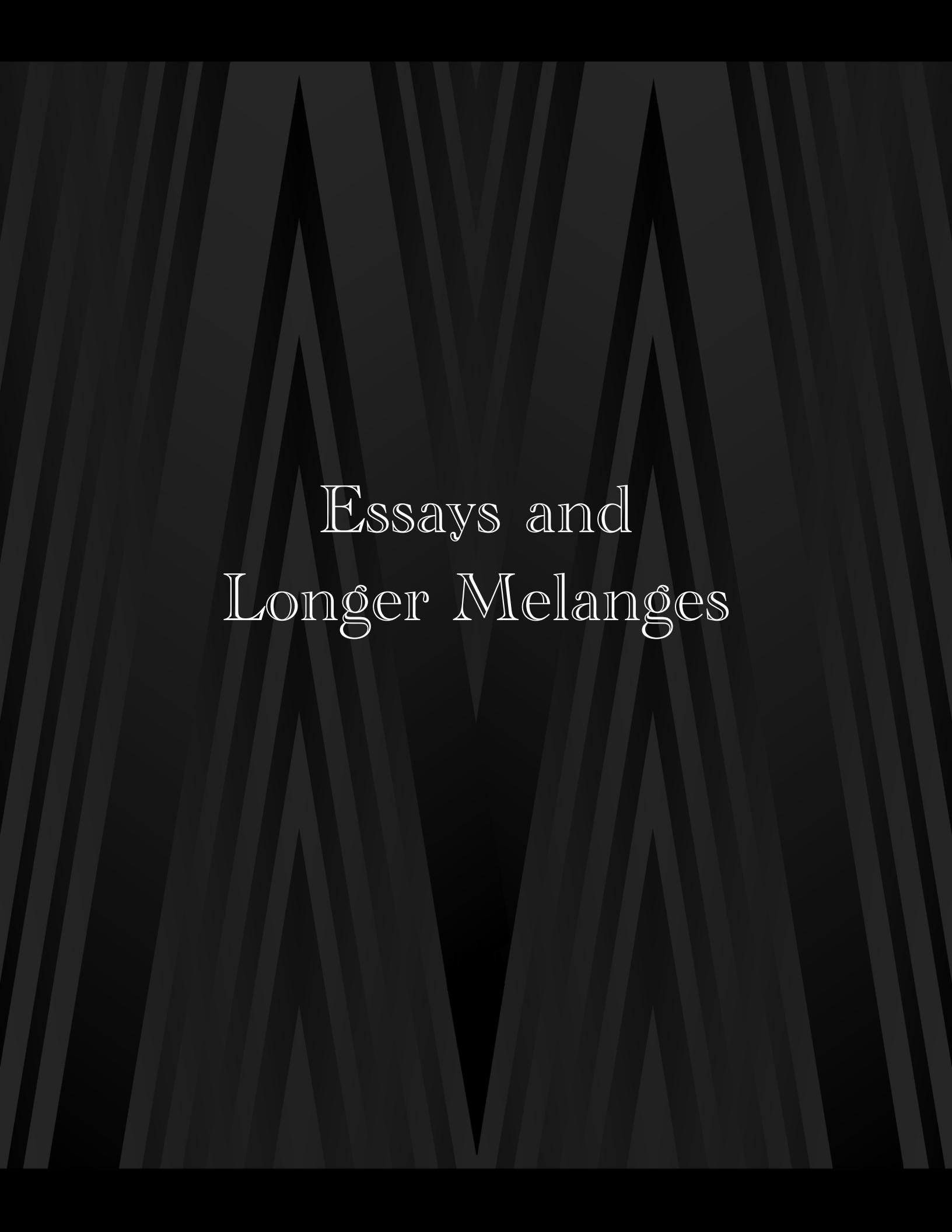
It all started with a product, a vision, a production line, an M-80, a television, a sales division; we are a modern company with values, a mill, a plant, a bottle rocket, a drill; it all started with a hope, a dream, a Roman candle, a stamp of approval, a benchmark, acts of removal, extraction, redaction; our theme is sustainability; fungibility, public utility; we produce a quality product; we produce commodity products; it all started with sugar, a silver salute, some spice, a slaughterhouse, everything nice; we are a smokestack, a lumberyard, a conveyor belt, a prison guard; a team—we are a modern company with values; it all started with an ice-breaker, a sparkler, a check in the box; we're heterodox, unorthodox, a paradox, a paradigm shift, we think outside the box, a RIF, a win-win resolution, a cherry bomb revolution.

Blend Statement:

This prose poem comes from my manuscript *Recursive City*, a hybrid collection of poetry, prose poems, video pieces, and typographic art preoccupied with fracturing forms, neologisms, and linguistic free play.

Is This a Prose Poem?

This is a prose poem; forgive it, for it knows not what it does.



Essays and Longer Melanges

Performing Donne, Donning Performance: Mapping Donne's Poems as Speech-Acts of Performative Sensibility

Introduction

Critics and scholars of Donne Studies have deconstructed and investigated his polymeric oeuvre, with a number of heuristic arguments. These are used to de-center the hermeneutic heritage of associating Donne with any one particular attribute. The mutable character of his canon--from divine, erotic, religious poems to sermons and letters, expressions of love, worldly pursuits, and metaphysical in all essence, renders a shape-shifting quality to his poems in an ever-inviting thrust and 'thirst' of the critics for new interpretations and critical impressions. Donne has been sanctified and fancied, written about and celebrated, critiqued and surveyed alike, as literary historians and commentators have focused on Donne's writings from the usual bio-historical, religio-political; on its zeitgeist; on how "what is said is articulated, transmitted, effected and received" (Frezer 2). His poems from love poetry to religious/divine sermons apart from an internal flow and cadence, each consist of a quality of its role-playing and the functionality of enactment.

Larry Pebworth asserts that of around 187 poems from his canon, Donne composed these 'poems as performances,' due to its coterie audience and its norms. Pebworth also explores Donne's role as a coterie poet with his art explicitly having a coterie character. Frezer notes that "Coteries provided an environment in which social upstarts were able to measure their talents against those of others . . ." (81). He writes further that, "Many of Donne's performances are theatrical in that the internal communicative systems, the relations between speaker and addressee, are in complex ways entangled with and reflected by those between writer and reader/listener, that is a text's external communicative system" (Frezer 5). This paper attempts to forge the readings of John Donne into the arena of "performance", making a case to treat these poems as utterances of performativity and speech acts. It was not just the element of metaphysical complexity introduced by Donne through its conceits that contributed to its resurrection and reanimation of the imitation of various acts of human nature; rather, it was also by way of its utterance, which has the potential to contribute to the matters of cultural historiography, and thus augment the poetic and aesthetic circuits of interpretation, apart from its literary and aesthetic layering. For this purpose, poems of Donne and its comparison to other poetic excerpts have been made to reveal the unique synthesis of sensibilities, and regard Donne not just as a poet, but as an artist or a spectacular showman having a foretaste of a performatory artist.

To read Donne's poems in the paradigm of performativity is to also read them as a site of potentially uncustomary and non-normative rhetoric of composition. In close comprehension, one realizes how the intellectually distinctive conceits often eclipse the tireless semantic workings of performativity. The element of performative participates in the cultural negotiations where the established modes of rituals/practices come in to toss and ruffle these new modes for itself or other selves to be created. My analysis, however, does stitch the first generation of linguistic anthropologists and rely upon their expansive theoretical argumentativeness for its thesis and for its premises, and does not make a foray into the post-structuralist cultural criticism of gendered domains or the second generation of cultural theorists. The latter-day theorists strike with the right questions on structures of identity formation, having pre-discursive, pre-mediated identities along gendered lines, as elaborated on by Judith Butler, Deborah Cameron, Kita Hall and other literary analysts of the day. Diversely, however, in the studies of John

Donne and in the post-structuralist paradigm of feminist philosophy, the examination of the absent beloved and the male poet's personae can be done using the masculine and feminine utterances as the frame of comprehension. How the poet-persona's speech acts contribute to gender consciousness and the self, the manipulation of rites and practices of agency, lovemaking, and of dominance in love can be studied in the light of un-gendering love in Donne's poems.

The paper situates itself within the theories of linguistic pragmatics and the philosophy of utterances as proposed and ushered by Austin, Ruth Finnegan, Michael Foster, Michelle Rosaldo. The tipping point for the ideation has also been the critical departure by Richard Schechner, who had demanded an overall re-configuration of the curricula, using performance as an approach in the broader spectrum of epistemological productions. He writes that, "what needs to be added is how performance is used in politics, medicine, religion, popular entertainments and ordinary face-to-face interactions" (5).

I

Performance in general is eminent in many a cultural sedimentation and is constantly practiced across disciplines and studies: politics is performed, experiments in sciences are conducted, duties are discharged, policies executed, implemented, epistemes are staged in knowledge-systems, mounted for constant critical encounters for an approach based on/entailing elements of performance. The point of divergence for any poetic investigation other than its referentiality and iconicity is not just what the lines say, or how they appear, rather, it is also what it "does" and "how" it says. Poetry tends to echo the inexpressible, the indiscernible intricacies of what exists, in its covert liminalities, in its resonance and vacuity, the predicaments and conflicts, what slips-by, fleeting sense of impressions, in a bid to establish a dialectical bargain with objects, conditions and contexts, receptors of varied nature, between the text and the self, to the text and its readers. To a performative, in a given context, this correlation furthers a liaison between the poet-personae and its audience, who now views the verse not just in the realm of saying but also doing something that can be recognized as performed in past or its possible play in future. This doing something also creates a subterranean connection between performativity and dramatic quality in Donne's poetry, as the paper proposed and explicates further.

Love exhibits itself and its relational essence only when it is performed, the emotional state has no validation until lovers enact in order to be called in love; or other kinds of love, requiring its unique set of actionable codes to establish its endurance. Of attraction, longing for the beloved/lover, which primarily manifests itself in physical intimacy as desire, "admitted no dualism between caritas and amor, . . . it can work inwardly in terms of gratification, and outwardly in terms of sacrifice and generosity" (Graham Ward). Roland Barthes writes in *A Lover's Discourse* that "Desire is squashed against need: that is the obsessive phenomenon of all amorous sentiment . . . ('Desire is present, ardent, eternal: but God is higher still, and the raised arms of desire never attain to the adored plenitude')" (16). Enacting desire on stage requires an active engagement of the performers as lovers along the audience in a shared, intimate field of imagination. Intimate moments of enactments of love both accurately and symbolically break the fourth wall, as desire is often unattainable or unfulfilled. Donne's poetic performance achieves its effects of love and desire, complex metaphors, tension between soul and body, embodied through symbols that work to signify the erotic, such as a flea or ecstasy, as a third-body performer. Similarly, in negotiating desire, the pauses, lovers' mourning, whispers, breathlessness can be used to enact the inherent sexual tension, or repressed passion of the lovers. Performing desire, as a metaphysical event may also require a lot of stage-elements, in terms of lighting, symbolic and thematic colors, ambience sound, and other paraphernalia.

In order to build the argument for developing Donne's poems as the exemplars of performative utterances, it is vital to understand the Austinian distinction and concepts of 'locutionary,' 'illocutionary' and 'perlocutionary' speech acts. J.L. Austin's groundbreaking theory in *How to Do Things with Words* in William James Lectures in 1955 stirred debates across the field of linguistic philosophy, the study of

semantics and the theoretical and applied mechanisms of research in language and linguistics. Austin's theory has also been extended to contemporary research, with subsequent discourses as arguments-counterarguments generated in response to Austin's work. A number of modern theoreticians, like John Searle and Herbert Clark, have made interventions in the shifting scope and relevance of speech actions, expanding them into specialized domains such as linguistic, computational analysis, literature, law, political-speech theory etc.

Performative pieces of poetic enactments as described in Austin's theory in *How to Do Things with Words* would function as the opening gambit for the present paper. It provided a conceptual framework, a kind of toolkit to interpret speech-acts in its many forms and their resultant modalities. According to Austin, "the illocutionary act [...] has a certain force in saying something and is 'conventional' whereas 'the perlocutionary act [...] is achieving of certain effects by saying something' and is not conventional" (Austin 121). To put it simply, Donne's poems consist of these perlocutionary and illocutionary speech acts, that essentially foster an embodied essence to its semantic and semiotic motion which renders them as pieces that move out of their textual manifestation. Thus, proposing a curriculum and paradigmatic shift in the interpretative and hermeneutic pathways, Donne's poems must be read as the bedrock of performativity, having an inherent performative sensibility to them, moving apart from the *metaphysical* prototype of poetry.

Austin has consistently negated and expressed his distaste for theatrical and poetic utterances, outside the purview of performativity: he sees these as 'etiulations of language' (Austin 3), as 'parasitic' or rather empty of any serious signification. Much like Derrida and a whole gamut of reactions that followed as rebuttals to Austin's belief, the paper equally confutes the assertion, in continuum with the mammoth rivulet of arguments that flowed from the questionable claim by J.L. Austin, who would regard a poetic utterance as 'non-serious/parasitic'. As Austin writes, "a non-serious performative utterance, as uttered in a play or a poem, say, is a parasite upon the true performative and cannot be considered legitimate" (Austin 104) in the words of the critic.

In another instance, and as other note of difference, the case in point is likened to one of the poems of Wordsworth, who gives the idea of a 'perfect woman' in his poem "Perfect Woman". Wordsworth writes:

She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleam'd upon my sight;
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament;
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair;
Like twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful dawn;
A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and waylay. . ." (lines 1-10)

In comparison to the above, Donne's other poem, "The Canonization," is about the act of love-making, when disturbed by a someone who castigates Donne's persona. Donne writes in "The Canonization,"

For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love,
Or chide my palsy, or my gout,
My five gray hairs, or ruined fortune flout,

With wealth your state, your mind with arts improve,
Take you a course, get you a place, [...]
Contemplate; what you will, approve,
So you will let me love.

Alas, alas, who's injured by my love?
What merchant's ships have my sighs drowned?
Who says my tears have overflowed his ground?
When did my colds a forward spring remove?
When did the heats which my veins fill [...]
Though she and I do love.
Call us what you will, we are made such by love [...] (1-5, 8-14, 18).

In the act of literary performativity, the language in the case of these two poetic utterances differs in terms of actions performed as constative and as performative. While “for god’s sake, let me love” is an utterance of enactment contributing to the instrumentality and expressiveness of the utterance’ conventionalities in a way that it moves the audience to rattle them of their fundamental systems of opinions and expectations of a poem, the descriptors of the ‘perfect woman’ her face as a ‘phantom delight,’ a ‘lovely apparition,’ a ‘moment’s ornament,’ ‘eyes as the stars of fair twilight,’ as a ‘gay image,’ ‘a dancing shape’ fail to move beyond the locationary signifier of portrayal if not performatory. In case of the former, the speech act to which it points at appears to be merely objectively reported or named. Thus, what a poem can do with words, is to create intimate realities, embrace cultural practices, speak of actions, progression of actions involved as utterly relevant or futile, bring about a Sisyphean or inutile acts/actions; one such as “observing the King’s honor,” “asking for his grace,” “chiding someone’s gout or palsy,” “ruined futures or five gray hairs” (“The Canonization”) till the poet-personae can be unconstrained in the act of love and become one in love. It is not to undermine that there are layers of complexity and accretion to the idea of performativity, especially when relegated to the domains of poetry. Slinn writes, “we need, then, a model for poetry which would account for the interrelationship between intrinsic and extrinsic referentiality, de Man’s referential aberration, without shifting into simplified inside-outside polarities and without reducing to travesty the complexity of the unique (60).

II

In congruity with Aristotle’s defense of tragedy against the epic in *Poetics*, tragedy which speaks to a wider and broader receptivity of human sensibilities, the magniloquent, mellifluous objective statements of epic often border on/as thrown statements at/from a distance, of experiencing the object with remoteness as depersonalization, as suggested by many critics of western criticism academia. Similarly, “Shelley’s “Stanzas Written in Dejection near Naples,” with lines such as: “The Sun is warm/ the sky is clear/the waves are dancing fast and bright/blue isles and snowy mountains wear/the purple room’s transparent might” (lines 1-4) may (as locationary speech acts) appeal to the aesthetic and even cognitive perceptivities for its imagery and metaphoric-sense brilliance, but does not impress for its affective sensibility/excitability in comparison to say, performing art, as Donne’s writing illustrates:

“I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I
Did till we loved? Were we not weaned
till then . . . ” (Donne, 1-3)

The impressionistic punch of words synthesizes this dissonance intrinsically that, through astonishment and awe, creates this harmony and consonance of experience decanted to the reader. Thereby, the dissociation of sensibilities as even pointed out by Eliot, fares better in Donne's poems not just because oft unified sensibility, as Eliot suggests, but for its synthesis of sensibilities, including sensation, emotion, play of wit and intellect, as well as being woven into actionable, performative utterances. This synthesis of sensibility brings about an intrinsic equilibrium between the text, its reader and its author, where all the elements of the poem come together to achieve a coherent signification of meaning and a sort of dialectical integration, now harmonized, which otherwise may be lost in abstraction, discursive thoughtfulness or *emotive-ness*, for the highest poetic virtuosity and craftsmanship. It is not, however, to reject other poets or relegate them to insignificance. Even in the poetry of Wordsworth, Tennyson, Shelley, Chaucer, Coleridge or Eliot, some of the best poems constructed by them, speak to the reader as if they are in action, of illocutionary utterances having an impact of perlocutionary as well. A great many minor poets of the modern age, and perhaps of all ages, may be granted this appreciation for a synthesis of sensibilities, including the performative as a sensibility; but Donne's body of work storms the poetic landscape for not just its discursive ransacking of weird comparisons, allusions, etc. but for its affective st[r]uck; i.e. the marked disruptions in the reader's emotions of every kind, than its effectual consequence of marked display of intelligence and wit. As A.E. Malloch writes, "Donne exploits the potentialities of language as instrument of communication and presents by verbal dialectic, the dance of meaning" (100). Thus, in terms of quality and effect of craftsmanship, the poetic value offered by Donne's poems, certainly merit on the spectrum of metaphysics, but with regard to its emotive/affective response, it invites the reader into a participative/performative domain. It is as if the quality of experience that runs through a particular Donne poem competes and wins over the potential cognition through wit and intellectual sophistry. The performative adds to the emotive field of force with its affective intensities, exceeding the cadences of intellectual vigor.

In the poem's field, the poet and her beloved enact/act as intense subjectivities, while the religious, spiritual and others can be performed on stage enacting the poet as lover, religious commentator, or a spiritual seeker. A performance is meant for "an effect," it adopts an external identity or a shadow, a mask to the enactor. A performance should not create any tussle between the character enacting a particular role with its object, while enactment, though also imposed externally to a lesser degree, emerges through practices that constitute them. Structuralists and deconstructionist theories have taught us that signs and objects may not have any essential nuclei to them, except for when multiple practices that enact them everyday from scratch, built them.

Performative utterances, much like any other disciplinary episteme, not only act as a carrier of its material history, but also facilitate the hidden conventions and intricate modalities of human existence beyond its deconstruction for the theoretical manufacturing and critical observation. As E. Warwick Slinn in "Poetry and Culture: Performativity and Critique" suggests, "a poem is itself a cultural event which participates in cultural reality, reconstituting or reshaping that reality in the very act of reiterating its norms . . ." (66). Slinn underlines that other than reiterating the norms, the language also "has the potential to disrupt those norms, to expose or to at least mark their boundary-setting potential" (61).

Poems of performative utterances could be serious disruptors of the structural configuration of social reality, as these utterances could force the undercurrents of such attributions to be inherently distorted and make way for orders, phenomena, and functionalities to be re-imagined. If language had been long seen as an active agent in the shaping of norms and practices, a performative utterance, as part of the socio-cultural domain, mitigates and fuels that dislocation.

A performative creates ripples, initiates disturbances in the set-thought to a system, in order to propagate an outward order, to have an outpouring of newer/alternative versions and possibilities for deeper action. As Slinn also underlines, "Since performatives occur within a dialogical structure, this asymmetry of utterance and excess means that perlocution (the resulting effect) may be included in the structure; referentiality, that is, includes the material reality of social effect as well as the material act of enunciation. Performative speech acts, in exceeding their own statement, may thus modify or disturb cultural meaning and reality . . ." (64). Emile Benveniste asserts that 'performatives diminishes, to an extent, a particular sense of ambiguity, a definite referentiality or referential agency by attaching a consistent, doable, done action through the utterance.' Johnson notes, "An utterance is performative in so far as it names the act performed . . . The utterance is the act; the utterer performs the act of naming it" (142). This self-referential peculiarity functions to provide a semiotic and semantic immediacy with poetic nonsense, while temporarily eliminating its irrelevance.

Manfred Pfister's 'Skalierung von Performativität' (scale of performativity) (qtd. in Pfister, 302) makes it possible to evaluate the performative quality of Donne's writings: He makes a list of several concrete, and even abstract linguistic indicators that reinforces the idea of performativity as a much-needed construct to read and apprehend Donne. He writes:

Such as frequency of personal pronouns, progressiveness, dialogisation, audience-orientation and self-reflexiveness helps to focus on performance as a theoretical concept that is more than a fashionable label. Apart from providing a useful tool for the practice of performative criticism, it also clarifies why Donne's texts promise a particularly rich field of research: personal pronouns abound in poems such as "The Canonization," not without the same pronoun shifting from one referent to another as the poem continues. Donne's marriage letters are no less ambiguous in their use of personal pronouns.

A performative reading, or performativity can augment and expand the circuit of cultural experience by constantly fudging the boundaries of genres and literary genetics of a text, by shifting the final signification beyond its spatio-temporal bounds. The performative frame functions much like "love, all alike, no seasons it knows, nor clime, nor hours nor days, months, which are rags of time" ("The Sun Rising").

As Diana Taylor has recently detailed, performance studies is a post-disciplinary scholarly cluster that has come to incorporate and shape a variety of perspectives imported from other disciplines, from linguistics and philosophy to anthropology and theater studies. Linguists and rhetoricians such as J.L. Austin, Jacques Derrida, and Judith Butler have emphasized the importance of the "event of speech" and the "performativity" of social identities produced by largely concealed citational and regulatory social mechanisms; dramaturgical anthropologists like Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz draw attention to the ways in which everyday social dramas and their processes of enactment are central to the claims of human agency and interdependent with genres of cultural performance; Joseph Roach and Taylor herself are committed to study the ways in which performance is coterminous with memory and history, and as such participates in the transfer of knowledge: all have revolutionized the ways in which performance can be approached (Notes 387).

Donne's poetry thus sets out and should serve as a 'coalitional site' (Jill Dolan 9) vis-a-vis poetry

meant to be read and poems meant to be performed, for the purpose of disciplinary formation, in a bid to expand generic and epistemological boundaries of performance beyond the bounds of theatrical performances in the future. As Judith Butler, Derrida, Barbara Johnson, Felman and Miller have established and extended enactments to rites, rituals, ceremonies, practices, routines and rhetoric, beyond positivist signification, so poetic utterances and writings can be seen and read as performative poetries, inclusive of “all spectacles that theatre leaves” (Taylor) from its purview. As the paradigm of performance suggests for plays, poetry performances or reading the performative utterance of poems publicly may also be the root of change, much like in earlier times when Aristotelian writing was discovered or stated; describing how it shaped the reality around, offering ways to perceive reality alternatively. As an instance, consider the lines below:

Spit in my face ye jews, and pierce my side,
buffet, and scoff, scourge and crucify me,
for I have sinned, and sinned, and only he,
who could do no iniquity, hath died
(“Holy Sonnet XI: Spit In My Face You Jews,” 1-4)

Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.
(“Holy Sonnets: Batter my heart, three-person’d God,” 11-14)

The tension in these lines arises not just from its sonic quality, but the flurry it creates from the emotive communion with God that touches a deep chord with the sensory reception with the reader. The beloved-lover binary is suspended, the conventional roles uprooted and an avenue even opened for cross-gendered readings. Performing these lines can not only disrupt the normative practices of gender and social hierarchy, but also even one’s proclamation of love and articulation of desire, essentially throwing into disarray the acts of performance of particular gender, voicing aloud the portability of gender an ongoing, practicing discursivity (Butler), anytime open to intervention, alteration for a revised signification or further, re-signification. Taken into the framework of the performative, poetry thus creates a disruptive and unsettling realm of altered signification, an ennobling space of discursive practice of continuous mobility. Creating images through words caters to stimulating sensibilities and senses, a poem comes alive through the oral and performative, delivered with timeless poetic quality. It, then, no longer needs to be assumed that the poet as speaker is the speaker as the subject. Kofi Anyidoho writes in “Poetry as Dramatic Performance: The Ghana Experience”:

... by the dramatic use of body language, voice, pause, tempo, gesture, and other paralinguistic techniques, the poetry is lifted from the cold print on a page and energized into a warm and living experience, an experience which the audience spontaneously identifies and which it may enhance through various degrees of participation and through encouraging applause or comment. (44)

Other than the epistemic and phenomenological function, these ‘potentially’ performative articulations move beyond the saucy and petty pedantic wretchedness of interpretation in a number of explorations in Donne’s studies. Janelle Reinelt writes, “Performance makes visible

the micro-processes of iteration and the non-incommensurability of repetition, in the context of historically sedimented and yet contingent practices, in order that we might stage theatricality, and render palpable possibilities for unanticipated signification" (213).

Conclusion

In order to bring new development and innovation in poetic practices of poetry, the analysis of performative utterances in poems of Donne provides a cushioned archetype for future poets to create affective yet powerful compositions. In the arena of Cultural Studies and Literature, poetry has already faced marginalization and sidelining to the peripheries for its perceived lack of social integration into the cognate or noetic consciousness of the multitudes. The formalist school of interpretation, with its overt emphasize on structural techniques, symmetrical and methodical elements ruffles and alienates plausible networks of integration to social practices, where performativity and language act, not as means to an end but as ways for its diversified immersion to bring about an intrinsic merit to both the aesthetic value and transformative virtue, cardinal to any text. Paul de Man notes, as also observed in the works of Slinn that, "The development of formalist criticism in the twentieth century, he observed, had produced a conception of form as "a solipsistic category of self-reflection," where "referential meaning is said to be extrinsic" (2). Such a separation of intrinsic (formalist) and extrinsic (social, historical) methodologies produced polarities of inside and outside, which de Man's attention to semiology intended to disrupt. Through unraveling discursive processes, he endeavored to show how literary rhetoric suspends analytical logic, opening up the possibilities of "referential aberration," a figural potentiality which he equated with "literature itself (AR 10)."

Poetry thus has a capacity to move from the glass-chambers, classrooms, books and confined spaces of reading, often bourgeois, to an audience who could feel its sensibilities gutturally, endure the sufferings it evokes viscerally, sense the chills in the spine, endure the stock and surprise corporeally. This not only helps a poet, who is usually limited to a coterie audience, come forth with invisible aesthetics through a comparison to other creative branches; it helps poetry in general be delivered and registered in the cognitive and creative senses to a wider audience. For Donne, a post-modern, post-structuralist eulogy and honor consist of the acts of performance and not just introspective or interpretative readings.

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Blend Statement:

While teaching Donne's poetic marvels in a classroom setting, the poems, as if beseech the reader to be *the speaker*, to adjust the sails and trails of the spoken word to that of a dramatic and excitable performance, almost impulsive; from the rhetoric of the page, the metaphoric literariness to that of speech-acts, spectacularly performative.

The epiphany appeared as if there were flashes of presentiments, his poems simply refusing to be just caged on the page, handcuffed in the metal rings of subgenres and genres.

Language Transference, Translation and Interpretation

Steven Strange
ANLE, ALDEEU, AATSP, COLT

Summary: A commentary on language in its many forms, the importance of prepared and qualified translators, and the process, tools, and ingredients necessary to produce an accurate translation, transference and/or interpretation.

Key terms: doctrine of the affections, rhetoric, morphing, circumlocution, substrata

In a children's cartoon series of the 1990s, one of the characters, a blind author named Jeffery Robbins, summarizes the events of one episode with this commentary: "*The written word is all that stands between memory and oblivion*" (*Gargoyles*, S.2 E.4, 19:44). It is quite a sophisticated, erudite, and profound quote for a children's program. Certainly, such a quote could serve as a catalyst for a professional discussion by linguists, linguistic paleoanthropologists, philologists, historians, translators, and interpreters. However, after pondering this quote for some time, it would seem more appropriate to change **word** to **language**, which would now be more in keeping with the focus of this essay.

In myriad ways, we have used language to give evidence of our existence on this planet and have now ventured to carry this evidence into the far reaches of outer space. We have demonstrated our presence in cave drawings, tools, pottery, architecture and, even more so, through the vehicle of written language, whether it be via cave drawings, cuneiform, pictograms, logograms, glyphs, ideograms, numbers, musical notes, alphabets, or characters; or through other forms of expression such as sign language, body language, paintings, sculptures, carvings, engravings, etcetera. All of these are symbols and manifestations which convey, represent and depict thoughts, concepts, experiences, understandings, impressions, sounds, and interpretations without using words to explain the same. They also serve as agents to record, recollect and recall life experiences and human understandings, and to prevent or impede what Robbins terms oblivion. The term language can also be applied to musical notation, time signatures in musical composition, and symbols for sound dynamics; architectural use of blueprints, sketches and layouts of buildings and their landscaped surroundings; mathematical use of symbols for calculation, processes and procedures, and other disciplines which do not use words to create and express the images of their understandings of their world view.

Language, manifested and represented in many ways, is the main vehicle through which humans express their thoughts, impressions, understandings, and the reasoning process. It can be said that each language user has their own linguistic identity or fingerprint. Language evolves as it meets the needs of the people who use it. In his essay, *Thought and Language*, Victorian author and critic Samuel Butler (1835-1902) uses a written form of language to explain his definition of language:

I believe I am right in saying that the essence of language lies in the intentional conveyance of idea from one living being to another through the instrumentality of arbitrary tokens or symbols agreed upon and understood by both as being associated with the particular ideas in question. The nature of the symbol chosen is a matter of indifference; it may be anything that appeals to human senses and is not too hot or too heavy; the essence of the matter lies in a mutual covenant that whatever it is shall stand invariably for the same thing or nearly so. (20)

Language, in its traditional meaning as used in this essay, can be compared to a living organism. It evolves and, through the process of selection and usage survives, a sort of 'theory of linguistic evolution.' Language constantly and consistently moves toward clarity of thought as it discards or accepts new understandings, concepts, and neologisms based on communicative and survival needs. What may once have been a popular word or phrase to our great grandparents, grandparents, parents, or to some of the present generation, may now be determined to be archaic in contemporary usage.

With the evolution of representing the spoken word through writing, human history could now be recorded and communicated using a more permanent and reliable method, perhaps even a tool by which humans could guarantee themselves a certain degree of immortality, and thus not relegate their existence, accomplishments and experiences to oblivion. In more recent memory, visual, oral, and written manifestations have fused harmoniously and effectively into cinematography, television, videos, DVDs, cellphones, iPod, and the use of artificial intelligence. Future communicative needs will determine humankind's creative and innovative genius to transmit understanding and information, and to continue their search and/or need for continuance or immortality.

William H. Allman, in his essay *The Mother Tongue*, describes the affinity that exists between language, culture, and experience:

The deep connections between languages demonstrates that far from a mere communication device, language is the palette from which people color their lives and culture. Intimately connected to the human experience, language oils the gears of social interactions and solidifies the ephemera of the mind into literature, history, and collective knowledge. It is the calling card of humans; announcing the presence of not only those alive today but, with its deep roots into the past, the ancient ancestors who came before us. (54)

Based on Butler's definition, and that of Allman, the slight revision in Robbins' original quote "Language is all that stands between memory and oblivion" is more in keeping with the emphasis in this essay, namely humankind's need to transmit and share the understandings and perceptions of one culture with those of another by using language in its written form, and the translation/transference process. Spoken and recorded language also act as vehicles for transmission of understandings, but this essay will emphasize the value and importance of the written word.

In the same essay, Butler defines the importance and purpose of the varied forms of the written symbol:

The written symbol is formed with the hand, appeals to the eye, leaves a material trace as long as paper and ink last, can travel as far as paper and ink can travel, and can be imprinted on eye after eye practically ad infinitum both as regards time and space. (21)

Individuals who are unable to use their hands have reprogrammed their brain so that their mouth or their feet, for example, can grasp and manipulate a writing utensil or paint brush to express their creativity and experiences on paper and/or canvas, while conveying a need, a message, or understanding to other human beings. It is probable that, as humankind continues to try and tap into the capabilities of the human brain, writing may not be the only option for communication. Experiments and research are being conducted to use brain waves to focus on activating computers and other technological devices. Perhaps someday language will be transmitted via brain wave imaging.

An artist, sculptor, composer or artisan will tell you that the medium of creative expression that they use is the non-verbal vehicle through which reasoning processes, experiences, understandings, concepts, and interpretations are expressed and conveyed, not only to other human beings, but in many cases to themselves. Language, in its many forms, is also the mechanism which enables all of us not only to pass on to subsequent generations an understanding of the world in which we live, but to share with other humans, wisdom and survival skills acquired through life experiences. In some cases, the various forms of language media are employed by humans as control mechanisms within their surroundings, allowing them to manipulate, categorize, and organize their environment. Friedrich Waismann (1896-1959) expresses this idea very well:

It [language] supplies us with certain categorical forms without which the formation of a coherent system of experiences, a world picture, would be impossible. In this sense, language shapes and fashions the form in which experience is set, and different languages achieve this in different ways. (108)

Language, in the traditional definition of the concept of a spoken and written form, even attempts to organize itself, for it is a tool that uses itself to explain itself.

In many circumstances, humankind uses this tool to manipulate and/or deceive other human beings. It is frequently employed as a catalyst to foster, alter, or change our perceptions of reality, at least within us, for many believe that we live in a world of perceived realities. Such attempts are made linguistically through the oral or written process of persuasion and convincing. If you ask native speakers of Spanish, Italian or English, for example, what the difference is between *persuadir/convencer*, *persuadere/convincere*, *persuade/convince*, they will tell you that they are synonyms. The difference, of course, depends on usage and understanding, however slight it may be.

The ancient Greeks and Romans called this approach *rhetoric*, for it was the art of using language to persuade listeners to a specific point of view or emotional response, and subsequently to action. In the 17th and 18th centuries, during the late Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo and Classical periods, even musical theorists and composers developed a sort of rhetoric within their own discipline. Known as the *doctrine of the affections*, they argued that music, like language, could also instill or arouse a variety of emotions, or affectations in listeners. The combination of certain musical techniques, chords, time signatures, tonalities in conjunction with words, and the use of certain musical instruments, proved quite effective. The composers considered that such affections were not just emotions but a basic component of the soul's essence. Noted Finnish composer Jean Sibelius (1865-1957) expands on this understanding when he said in a 1919 interview, "Music begins where the possibilities of language end." Could Sibelius's quote be altered to read "The arts begin where the possibilities of language end?" If so, it raises a series of questions: where do the possibilities of language end, and where do the arts begin? Is language in and of itself an art? Are the arts a form of language? Again, additional questions for linguists to consider, ponder, explore, and debate.

When dealing with the art of written and/or oral language, the translator's role is to cross the frontier into the linguistic heritage of one culture and to transmit those experiences, realities, and perceptions, recorded with language, to another culture. It is an articulated effort by the translator to transfer the mental or emotional impression into a verbal, audible, visual or written image. It requires the translator to go beyond the limits of their own language, and their personal and culturally programmed world view. In attempting these translations of understandings and impressions,

translators, in all aspects and phases of human activity, use liberties or licenses in translation, transference or interpretation to transmit either the realities, experiences and perceptions of an individual, culture or civilization or those of the collective conscience of the human family. Who has not read of more than one interpretation of sections of the United States Constitution, of a word or clause in a statute, law, ordinance or judicial decision, listened to multiple performances of composed music and heard different orchestras and/or vocalists interpret the same written music in various ways and styles, seen the same written dramatic work performed by different theater companies and noticed variations in the acting, staging, and direction, read several commentaries about the meaning or theme of the same painting, served on a negotiation's team, and discussed the impact of using *the/a/an, shall/will, by/in/on* in a contract, or read or heard about Biblical scholars who have interpretation questions, issues, and concerns about how to translate, express and convey the meanings of the original languages of the *Sacred Scriptures* to other languages, or whether they can be transferred at all? Such are the dilemmas present in creativity, individuality, understanding, and interpretation in linguistic activity and conveyance, whether through the oral or written traditions.

Hugh A. Harter, in the Translator's Preface of his edited English translation of Guillermo Diaz-Plaja's *A History of Spanish Literature*, writes:

A translator must necessarily be, at least to some extent, a traitor. Some passages come quickly, easily, and accurately into the 'step-tongue'; others never seem quite right in the second language. (xiii)

The Italians have a saying which reinforces professor Harter's assumption: "*Traduttore, traditore.*" It appears that those translations which are done with relative ease and accuracy (the criteria may vary in determining this "ease and accuracy") probably have some cultural or conceptual commonality between the languages. On the other hand, those translations/transferences that prove to be challenging, awkward and cumbersome, more than likely contain cultural nuances and/or conceptual, perceptual differences not easily shared by the experiences as expressed in the lexicon of both languages. It is the translator's role and responsibility to bring these cultural, conceptual, and lexical differences into a harmonic understanding.

Sometimes translations or interpretations of written or spoken language contain some 'traitorous' passages, interpretations, or utterances because of either conceptual or lexical differences between the languages, or a lack of understanding of the cultural and linguistic nuances and idiosyncrasies which are often found in the substrata of words, phrases, idioms, axioms, symbols, structure, syntax, grammar, etcetera. Quite frequently, a word, phrase, symbol or expression may morph into a different meaning or understanding because of a cultural and/or contextual shift in usage as it passes through time or in its attempts to meet the needs of the people who speak it. Contacts with other languages and cultures can also affect the morphing process. Generation after generation has borne witness to this morphitization within its own linguistic environment.

Translators, as trustees of linguistic transference, constantly seek clarity of thought when they engage in interpretation or translation. They face the challenge of defining and deciphering the word, phrase or expression based on its usage in context, or transferring it to current usage in a more contemporary setting. Such efforts are needed to enable the transference of understandings from one culture to another. When doubts occur, the translator frequently relies on explanatory notes when translating. Manipulatives, gestures, discussions with native speakers, or oral explanations to clarify

misunderstandings or doubts are employed when conversations or dialogues are in force. Each of us, to a greater or lesser degree, is a translator, transferor, or interpreter throughout our lifetime. While learning language as children, we are exposed to new words, graphics, body language, or experiences in our environment or culture. It is not uncommon for the child to ask an adult to explain and clarify the meaning of words, phrases, body language, actions, etcetera, all this within the linguistic and cultural experiences of the child. These explanations can be given orally, graphically, pictorially, through body language, manipulatives, and the like. Adults react the same as children do when they are confronted with these linguistic challenges, especially when they are exposed to neologisms and expressions created by new products, scientific discoveries, new technologies, second language acquisition, and the jargon created by generations of young adults.

Circumlocution is often used when the word or phrase does not immediately come to mind, or there is some lexical and/or cultural deficiency. Multiple strategies and approaches, such as comparing and contrasting, may be employed to facilitate maximum understanding within the cultural and linguistic contexts and experiences of the recipients. Sometimes the upper layers of the linguistic substrata are understandable and readily transferable and other times they are not. The same can be said for deeper linguistic substrata. Sometimes they can be brought to the surface, and sometimes such an attempt is problematic. When and if they do reach the surface level of understanding, they may not be processed, assimilated or understood by the receiver. The printout may be somewhat nebulous. Even body language can be misinterpreted, as it is a physical manifestation of a layer(s) of the historical, cultural, and linguistic substrata that differs within the human family. Multiple meanings of words, archaisms, rhyming words, syntax, representation of the passing of time through ‘tenses’ or ‘moods’, neologisms, idiomatic expressions, proverbs, metaphors, similes, and the like, are some of the other challenges that face the translator, interpreter or transferor. The great polyglot professor of linguistics at Columbia University, Mario Pei (1901-1978), expresses in his book *The Story of Language*, the history behind the need for the translation/transference/interpretation process, with an indirect allusion to the Biblical Tower of Babel narrative of the *Old Testament* (Genesis, 11):

When man realized that he could no longer communicate with his fellow man by reason of the confusion of tongues, he began to seek ways and means of circumventing the will of his Creator. Translators and interpreters were the outcome. Their inefficiencies and insufficiencies are at times disheartening. (427)

To minimize such “inefficiencies and insufficiencies,” it is essential that a translator possess an almost perfect command and understanding of more than one language, and the culture in which it thrives. Resources such as dictionaries, thesauruses, and the like can be useful, but unfortunately do not explain the cultural subtleties often found below the surface meaning in the substrata and, of course, stored in the linguistic psyche and experience of the native speaker. Diversity of national customs can effectuate a confusing translation. Every now and then, the native language, experiences, and culture of the translator contribute to a cumbersome or inaccurate printout.

The language of a culture or a civilization is a testimony to how it views the world, the human family, and itself. It is an essential part of its identity. It is a cultural fingerprint unique to that society that is passed from generation to generation. How each of us uses language is our own individual linguistic fingerprint, if you will, and can be demonstrated in several different understandings of the same work by different translators. Since time is of the essence in the oral interpretation/translation process, it is by its very nature much more instantaneous and automatic than that expressed by writing.

It is expected that the dominant tongue of the translator/interpreter will play a role in transferring understanding to another language, often leads to confusion or misunderstandings. Writing and graphic representations have always allowed more time for mental and cultural processing, comparing, for excavating below the linguistic surface, and working and reworking the translator's efforts.

Technology will certainly develop whereby portable translation software will let us converse with anyone, with all parties speaking their native languages. How technological advances will handle, transfer, process, and convey emotional, prejudicial, cultural and linguistic subtleties and idiosyncrasies that are below the surface and in the psyche of the native speaker, remains to be seen. Waismann, in his essay to which we have already referred, explains the underlying cultural nuances in languages:

In other words, every language contains deep-sunken in it, certain molds, designs, forms to apprehend phenomena, human action, etc. It is hardly going too far to say that a whole world picture is wedded to the use of the transitive verb and the actor-action scheme that goes with it – that if we spoke a different language, we would perceive a different world. By growing up in a certain language, by thinking in its semantic and syntactical grooves, we acquire a certain more or less uniform outlook on the world – an outlook we are scarcely aware of until (say) by coming across a language of a totally different structure we are shocked into seeing the oddity of the obvious, or what seemed to be obvious. In this sense, language shapes and fashions the frame in which experience is set, and different languages achieve this in different ways. (108)

Linguistic excavation into the substrata is usually a challenging endeavor; it may require prior and in-depth study of historical linguistics, psycholinguistics, etymology, comparative linguistics, and other related disciplines. It is clear, however, that the more the translator uncovers, the closer they will come to a fuller understanding of the essence of the graphic representation, and the reason for its use. They must demonstrate superb skills of observation, penetration, and analysis; they must be prepared to assess the word, symbol, glyph, etc., and the reason behind its usage in determined contexts and circumstances. After weighing the options, it is hoped that an understandable and clear translation/transference printout will be available and there will be fewer or no 'traitorous' passages, *faux pas*, or cultural innuendos, subsequently creating a harmonic, linguistic transfer that has been established and clarity of thought has been achieved. However, the details embedded in the linguistic and cultural psyche of the native speaker, unfortunately cannot be transferred to translations.

The abridged and simplified version of the translation process, as described herein, is essential if clarity of thought and understanding are to be achieved. It is the basic recipe whose primary ingredients tend to blend together to produce and transmit clarity of thought, whether you call the final product of such a procedure a transference, interpretation, or a translation. As the world becomes smaller and more intimate because of advanced, instantaneous, multifaceted technology and communication, the translators' efforts may prove to be more challenging as they attempt to stay abreast of neologisms, cultural changes, linguistic sharing, new expressions, etcetera. They may encounter additional challenges as they attempt to reduce *inefficiencies and insufficiencies*, to achieve clarity of thought, to improve understanding within the human family, and to reinforce the concept that *Language is all that stands between memory and oblivion*.

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Blend Statement:

Language is a creative art form which uses many vehicles to express the needs, desires, perceptions, understandings, interpretations, and visions of people around the world. Such expressions manifest themselves and are translated and/or transferred into other creative artistic forms such as poetry, prose, painting, sketching, sculpture, architecture, musical notation, mathematical and scientific formulas, and other endeavors. The art of translation/transference/interpretation allows us to share in the wisdom, dreams, creativity, and understandings with other members of the human family.

Michael Bird

The dog bomb

Thanks to Ovidiu Stancu, Cerasela Marin, Horea Musca and Alexandru Enache, who worked together with me on the dog documentary 'Man's Best Friend'.



Ten years ago, animal rescue charities estimated that up to one million dogs were roaming free in Romania. I helped make a film following these strays in city centres, around housing blocks, on country roads and in abandoned factories. To find a solution to this crisis, our team spoke to vets, academics, volunteers and politicians. Some argued Romania should kill the dogs, while others wanted to neuter them and put them up for adoption. No one knew why there were so many, but everybody had a theory. The most freakish idea came from the deputy mayor of a small town near the Black Sea. He believed the dogs were the legacy of a master plan by the Communist dictatorship, which controlled the state from 1947 until 1989. This is what he told our team. I have taken liberties with the text, and imagined how his hypothesis would play out to the present day.



“Before World War Two, we worked with our face to the earth. A few landowners enjoyed the high life, but most of us slept in shacks, ploughed the mud and grew crops. We fed our children, and we fed our animals. Dogs guarded our yard from thieves.

“After the war, the Reds took over, and began to turn Romania from a farm into a factory. They forced us from the country to the city, and gave us an apartment in a tower block, with our own bathroom, hot water and electric light. We moved from the land to the sky.

“But our president Nicolae Ceaușescu was afraid. Because the people now lived so close together, they gossiped outside their homes, in the queue for bread, on the way to work, and on the assembly line. They realised they didn’t have enough food, energy for their homes, and freedom to go where they wanted. They knew who to blame for this breakdown.



“Ceaușescu feared the masses would rise up and depose him, so he needed to stop any form of dissent. His aim was to turn society against itself. To achieve this, he used his secret police. They recruited one resident in each housing block to report on everybody else. These informers looked for anything subversive in their neighbours’ behaviour, such as if they listened to banned radio stations, read forbidden texts or badmouthed the regime.

“But the residents figured out the scheme. They stopped talking to the snitches in the corridor, or inviting them to their parties, weddings, or baptisms. The spies were isolated. The secret police couldn’t do their job anymore.

“Ceaușescu understood that if he wanted to control the people, he could not depend on the people. He needed another approach, which avoided human risk. His plan relied on dogs.



“In a remote forest, the secret police built special farms, where they bred millions of puppies. In the middle of the night, they packed the dogs into vans and drove them to Bucharest and other big cities. While everyone was asleep, they set the animals free in building sites, down alleyways and in the yards of high-rises.

“At the same time, the people were hungry and poor. They rebelled and took over the cities. Hundreds of thousands crowded in front of the parliament. Here, Ceaușescu stood on a balcony and talked to the protestors, hoping to calm them down, but they booed him, so he and his wife fled in a helicopter. They flew out of the capital and landed in a large town in the countryside, where the police arrested them. A military court found the couple guilty of genocide. On Christmas Day 1989, a firing squad shot them dead.



“Communism fell, but the leaders remained in power, and changed their role as comrades in a workers’ paradise to ruthless businessmen. Instead of controlling the means of production in the name of the state, they controlled this in the name of themselves. They stole the land from the people. They stole the factories, farms and shops from the people. They stole the country from the people. And they called this capitalism.

“Meanwhile, the rest of the population was free, but if they wanted their son or daughter to have good marks at school, they had to pay a bribe to the teachers. If they wanted treatment in a hospital, they had to pay a bribe to the doctors. If they wanted a good job in public administration, they had to pay a bribe to the officials. Because they had to pay so many bribes, and earned so little money, millions left to work for higher salaries abroad, and did not come back.



“Meanwhile, the dogs bred faster. They moved onto empty plains of concrete, and to ruined factories, lived off rubbish heaps, and searched for food and a place to sleep. Thousands roamed through Bucharest, in the car parks of schools and hospitals, and in playgrounds.

“They chased children riding bikes, and snapped at pensioners’ shopping bags. In markets at the end of each day, they waited for bones and offal. When night fell, they crowded at warehouses and old industrial sites, where the guards fed them.

“Everyone was afraid to walk the streets at night, because dogs ran out of the dark, barking in confusion, teeth bared, their eyes red with hunger.

“When the dogs gathered in the yards of tower blocks, the residents reacted to this in conflicting ways.



“Some stroked and pampered the strays, and gave them cuts of meat and sausage. They built kennels for them in car parks. If a dog was sick, they took it to the vet, and paid for it to be neutered. When there was a storm, they let the animals into the basement of the block, and gave them a blanket to rest on.

“Others believed the dogs were feral, and no one could control them. They argued that dogs would always defend their land, so they would attack strangers. Often these were dog owners, who wanted to show the contrast between their pure breeds and the mongrels. They said the City Hall must catch and kill these beasts. When the mayor was too lazy to act, they took matters into their own hands. They mixed fragments of glass into meat, and placed this outside in feed bowls.

“In front of their blocks, the residents drank too much, bickered about the dogs, shouted about the dogs, and fought over whether to love or fear the dogs. They talked about nothing else.



“At the edge of a park in Bucharest lived an old man with a house and an open yard. Dogs wandered here, as they knew the man would feed them. In the park, a three-year-old boy was playing with his grandmother, but wandered towards the yard. A dog savaged him. The boy died. Some argued this was a guard dog. Others claimed it was a stray. But the people were angry. Though only one dog killed the child, every dog in the city was on trial. The mayor said there must be no more animals on the street.

“The catchers came to the blocks armed with guns and shot the strays with tranquillisers. They picked up their bodies, threw them in vans, and caged them in shelters. When no one adopted the dogs, the vets poisoned them, wrapped them in plastic and burnt them.

“In a few weeks, there were no more dogs on the streets. The city’s residents walked out of their houses and their blocks, and could see what was happening. Trash was everywhere. Pavements were packed with cars. The air reeked of diesel. Politicians had built mansions caged in barbed wire, to protect themselves against the wrath of a city they had plundered.



“The people looked at their lives. They worked long hours for low salaries. Their friends and relatives had gone abroad and had lost touch with their country and family. They needed someone to blame. They could no longer hate the communists. They could no longer hate their neighbours. They could no longer hate the dogs. So they hated those in charge.

“The people gathered in squares. In their thousands, they marched up the main boulevards. They protested against the leaders who lied. And they would not go home until they got what they wanted.

“The ministers didn’t know how to stop this wave of anger, so they resigned from their jobs, and the Government fell. The police did not know what to do with so much evidence of theft, so they arrested the politicians. The judges didn’t know what to do with so many politicians on trial, so they put the mayor in prison. They put members of parliament in prison. They put a prime minister in prison.



“I see Ceaușescu, looking down from the clouds, or up from the flames. He is laughing, because his plan worked. He knew the best way to divide the people was to explode a dog bomb. To flood the streets with puppies. Every citizen who met a stray was faced with the dilemma: do I kill it or feed it? For every one of us who rubbed the animal’s belly, was another who punched its snout.

“When the leaders lost the dogs on the street, they lost their authority. But we have to pay attention. They are always trying to trick us into fighting a fake enemy. The techniques may change, but the strategy remains. We must watch out for something like a million dogs. But what does *something like* a million dogs look like? I don’t know. I wish I did. Once we discover this secret, we will be free of corruption, power and greed.

“I hope this is a world we are ready to master.”

Blend Statement:

‘The dog bomb’ begins from a conversation I had with a conspiracy theorist about how authorities use stray dogs as a tool to control the population in Romania. The story draws on this premise to analyze real events from the fall of Communism until the present day. This hybrid creative nonfiction / fiction / photo story plays out against a backdrop of historical and modern images of Romania.

Preface

*I wrote this essay for the victims who died in the tsunami and lie at sea.
I pray for the souls of those who died in the Great East Japan Earthquake.
I wrote this essay about what I felt while walking along the seaside.
On 11 March 2011, the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami hit towns on the Pacific coast of Japan.
Many people died.
Some are still missing.
This is not an event of the past, and it is time to pass on the requiem to the next generation.*

*The sea is connected to the world.
This seaside is also connected to the world.*

I chose this title because, as a citizen who witnessed the disaster, I want to tell the next generation and the people of the world about the tsunami disaster.

*The sea, where so many people died, is full of sadness and fear.
Many souls exist in this sea.*

*On this seaside, there are people who are willing to help us in our grief.
There are people with whom we can share both sorrow and rest.
To be close to the sea of souls with them is also a prayer for the repose of souls.*

The theme of the work is gratitude and repose.

*I work at the Tohoku Medical and Pharmaceutical University Hospital, which was built for disaster recovery.
I will continue to work together with the citizens for the recovery.*

Thank you very much for reading.

Across the Sea of Souls

On sunny days, the beautiful azure sea awakens me.

The tides of the sea are always the same.
The horizon of the sea is always the same.

I see ships in the distance.
Flocks of seabirds float on the sea.
Surfers skillfully maneuver their surfboards and ride the waves.

On a clear day, the sea is calm and beautiful.

But this is the sea where many people died in the tsunami.
It is a sea of souls.

The experience of losing so many people in the tsunami is beyond the word trauma.
It is far beyond my life's imagination.

I therefore began to question whether the results of trauma research and psychotherapy
could reach the souls that exist under the sea.
Is there any way to heal the wounded souls?

I was rendered speechless and helpless by the power of the tsunami.
My mind and body were crushed by the tsunami.
Trauma therapy and mindfulness were drowned out by the tides on the beach.

I wonder if the seabirds could hear us.

Bereaved families visit the beach for hugs and to reconnect with loved ones who died in
the tsunami.

How empty are the days when we cannot feel the warmth of our loved ones.
If we could go back in time, we would have all evacuated before the tsunami hit.

Only regrets remain on this beach.
Those who are left behind are crying and enduring their loneliness.
Still, We must live.

The seabirds are witnesses to the many tears on this beach.
They know the truth of this beach.

The seabirds on this beach serve as messengers.
Seabirds, convey our wishes to the souls that lie in the sea.
Convey my words to them.

Time passes, the seasons change, and the seaside landscape changes.
And the landscape before the tsunami is past and forgotten.

New life is born in this town.
There is also a growing population of young people who have not experienced the tsunami.

People unfamiliar with this seaside town often ask:
"Why do you live in a town affected by tsunamis? There's no point in living here."
Those words make me feel like a disaster.

I would suggest that it can be difficult for trauma professionals who have never
experienced a tsunami to imagine what it might be like.
The tsunami drowns out even their imagination.

I am a witness to this seashore, just like a seabird.

I am no different from a seabird over this sea of souls.
That is who I am, just as I am.

I pray silently as a witness.
But my emotions are moving like wild waves.

To offer up a prayer that will never end.

O souls that lie in the sea!
I pray silently in front of the cenotaph.
For the many lives lost after the tsunami warning.

O many lives lost, I am looking for a way to connect with you.
Can anyone tell me how to do that?

The empty can in my hand is blown away by the strong sea breeze and disappears beyond the sea.
But I still have many memories in my hands.
They are treasures that must never be lost.

The sea that took so many lives.
This sea knows where the souls are.

The sea!
The wide blue sea! O shining sea!
By the power of the sea, please protect our souls.
Today, tomorrow, for the next 100 or 200 years, forever.

This is the small prayer of a small human being standing in a corner by the sea.
There is no end to this prayer.

A small prayer that will continue forever.
It is a small prayer by a proud little being for the many lost souls.

There is so much sadness left on this beach.
There are people willing to help with the tsunami recovery efforts on this beach.
There is someone who is willing to sit with the sadness of the person in front of them, to accept their sadness, and to cry with them.

There are people who sincerely accept the absurdity and sadness of this world, crying with me and encouraging me, even at the cost of self-sacrifice.

They wish for the happiness of others and earnestly strive for it.

I admire such a noble philosophy.
I admire their eyes.
Tears shine beautifully when illuminated by the sun on the beach.
The most beautiful sparkle in life is the existence of oneself.

I learned that from him.

Blend Statement:

This creative essay, written in the form of poetry, teaches us about loss and resilience. It shows us how memory, pain, and love can transcend time and space, connecting us indelibly to distant places and events. Engaging in creative essay writing accelerates the process of loss and recovery.

Piano

Alone, my old piano stands, silent in waiting. I pull out the bench, wipe off the dust with so much care, it's as if I'm still crushed under automotive steel, an accidental amputee. Not recovering. Not released from a hospital ward with a reconstructed limp, more out of time than inclination. I've haunted my own home without notes to cue you or my last performance, a rattled remembrance as silenced as my piano.

Now my fingers stroke ivory and my mind waits for the shock of inspiration. That will meld notes into melody, into harmony, into me, and into you. That will change the striking of a set of keys into hypnotic rhythms, into us. That will let me forget. Forget and remember.

The first note is the hardest, until I reach for the next. I don't know where to go. I fumble for a second, then somehow find you hidden in the keys, in ebony and ivory, and in memory.

You're waiting for me under the streetlights; snow circles in and dews your forehead. Your icicle lips brush the hands of a musician, rub the gold that twists between my fingers. The concert is over; now the slow walk home. Our fingers cross and we set out step by step. Crunching boots, wisping breath.

It's been too long. My swollen stumps stumble out of time. Keys falter under pounding fingers. This isn't music, this is noise. So many years of my life bent over an instrument and now this atrophy. This creeping cold from icicle tips.

Pebble hail makes a sidewalk out of every road. So blind, so crisp. So beautiful, so cold. My thighs isolated in their pant legs are already frozen through, thudding driftwood; all this huddling scuffling does so little good.

Broken chords. I repeat long stretches, but my fingers falter at a rest. Won't remember the rest. They flail, they beat, but how can I control what is no longer my own? My mind can't grasp what my fingers have known so intimately. Withered hands, now old and wrinkly and stiff, thick-nailed and numb.

You tremble, you shiver, under my arm. You burrow into my shoulder. We draw each other closer, until we borrow each other's breath, catching it as it escapes clouded between lips. We share the warmth that wells from the touch of skin on skin, faces pressed together under coats and over scarves, under streetlights and stoplights and stars.

It begins with our hands, clasped closed and frozen stiff, but spreading to caress. We tumble into our embrace, enfolding and unfolding, encircled in each other, craving the sublime, impelled by that desperate sense that knows where to stretch, bend, unfurl. That present urgency of revelation, exposure, disclosure, of knowing beyond comprehension, sensation. We shudder, we shiver, filled with thrilling, trilling, transitory grace, in the cold and in the night. I fall with you, into you, as you fall into me.

I make a staggered entry, passing melodies between voices, between hands, between fingers. For one stunning moment everything sounds incredibly clear – then I drop your voice as its melody falls from right to left. Unevenly matched, one hand collides with the other and I lose you shaking, quaking, lapsing muddled into noise.

Lungs gasping for breath on a side road, for the stabbing, staccato air that tells me I'm alive. Not even trying to remember. Headlights in a storm, I'd tell everyone later, was the last I could recall. I wish I

could say that I'd tried. That I'd sealed my lips to yours and given you my breath, that I'd pumped your chest or shocked you into living. That I'd even glanced your way.

This is blind darkness, felt darkness, groping for more than a whimper. Overlapping voices linger, while new themes and variations wait for release. My foot pushes down the damper pedal, as passing strains bleed together. My song is broken: I can no longer distinguish what was memory, what was memorized, mesmerized.

Lying flat in a blizzard, the snow blows on, one moment into the next. I imagine that my hands are resting, not frozen to eternal numbness. That every sharp prick on my face is a flake melting, not blood crystallizing. That you are still beside me. That I'll see you again. I hold out my hands, but it's too late.

I change keys, but whether by steps or by leaps, your voice needs more than transposition to carry through this maze of sounds. This piece needs to be more than unfinished intervals. It is not enough to revive fragments from figments, to reconstruct a broken song from blurring voices, movement by movement, or piece by piece. It is not enough to be left with more than longing.

Snow melds with hail and buries my face. My cheeks burn. Beneath my scarf, wet, warm breath traps itself against my face. If I stop breathing, it too will freeze. My eyelashes thrash against the crystallizing vapour, as if that could protect them; my eyelids bond as my breathing slows. I lie stilled.

There is a brief peace in the rest, in lying deaf with nothing but the lulling absence that ends one movement and precedes another. But even in that silent interruption, when there is nothing to hear, I listen for you, for that lingering possibility, that fixed idea that prefigures composition or arrangement, that commands realization, actualization, and creation.

Now, when it's too late, I can gaze upon you. Kneeling over, I imagine your face as veiled in ice. Hardened condensation glazes your features, preserving but obscuring your expression, smooth to perfection. I reach out, but with one touch the shroud will shatter.

My hands drop back to my side.

Silence. Rest.

Forgive me, but I must begin anew.

Rubbing raw, the hands of a musician seek out cold feet, cold hands, cold cheek. Out of time, yet waiting for a heartbeat. Count me in, my love. I'm waiting, still waiting. Sustaining. We exist out of touch, but I have not lost your voice. By whatever intention, whatever instinct, still, we'll move.

Improvisation, they call it. New creation, how does it know what it is to become, note by note, stroke by stroke? It takes no imagination to produce something like this, only inspiration. It takes no words to play something like this, only desperate passion, and dreadful conviction. Only mortality.

Fingers playing skin, ebony and ivory, a melody so well-known it cannot completely be forgotten. My fingers know how to find all your secret places, where they're waiting to be caressed into a tune. We live in the song, harmony and melody, more than voices, intertwined souls. Soaring and weaving, searching for the next note. Propelled moment by moment by that hungry sense that knows inexplicably where to stretch, bend, unfurl...

Stretch and strike. Unfinished thoughts. My hands are controlled by another. My heart is beat by another. What I feel belongs to another. The melody guides me to swell, to push, to release, to dwell. In this momentary melody renewed, I forget myself, moment by moment. Movement by movement. Softly.

Gently. *Piano*.

My ear finds the double-beating heart resounding in your chest, my own absorbs it until our lives beat to the same rhythm. We pause, together. We rest, together.

What are eyes, nose, mouth, when there is touch, skin against skin, that thrill of being more than one and the same. More than noise in that moment, moment by moment.

The worst is forgetting the face of love. Forgetting the details but not the loss.

Ebony and ivory. Smooth to perfection.

Improvising, where there would be nothing.

Blend Statement:

Piano is a prose poem that was performed for a live audience as a dramatic reading, but it is not a typical monologue, as the speaker is intimately experiencing rather than self-talking or addressing the audience.

Is This a Prose Poem?

Piano makes use of fragments, rhythms, cadences, and sounds in a style that is associated with poetry, although it is written as prose. It focuses on evocative fragmented experiences of emotions within a broken narrative.

NOW THAT I AM IN GLASGOW AND CAN THINK

Deliver us from evil.⁵

This was the first church. It was Episcopalian and ‘Super Accepting’ but mostly it was cold. I sent my dad a picture and he said, why is everyone wearing hats? In Scotland they don’t splurge on heat.

Over winter break we watched *The Departed*. My father was delighted to explain the subtext: that the title comes from the Catholic prayer for the dead, because the movie is about the Irish mob in Boston, and Lord knows the hold Catholicism has on the Irish. *And may the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.* I was confused about this. He said, the faithful departed are those who have died, but are still in purgatory; faithful to God, but their fate not yet decided.

My dad thinks that in *The Departed* this surely refers to the parallelism in the moral grey area of both the mob and the police. It made me think of a song lyric — *all my ghosts are with me / I know you feel them too.*⁶ Carrying our ghosts with us as faithful departed. Can you feel them, too? M says some people never leave our dream-system. Maybe these are the ghosts.

And may the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Shakespeare says, *all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death.*⁷ I read this when I was younger and pictured a long, dark hallway with literal court jesters on fire. Burning. But lighting the way.

—

I always thought God would look a bit like one of the Beatles. Or maybe Dumbledore, but in the earlier movies, before he got old and tired. My roommates and I have been projecting *Harry Potter* on an old sheet in our kitchen each night.

The priest wasn’t hot, like I was hoping (though this isn’t *Fleabag*, I suppose), and his sermon made no sense. I could tell L wasn’t listening either. I brought the little booklet home but on the way I dropped it in the mud.

L says Catholic mass was the original drag: they have all these crazy outfits, and the bread is supposed to be like...Jesus’ body, and then the wine is his *blood*.

—

L was looking for a tablecloth for her kitchen. She put candles in bottles and drew pictures of her roommates in oil pastel to hang on the wall. I asked her to help me decorate my room, found old magazines at a vintage store. She ripped out pictures of forests and John kissing Yoko on the cheek. She likes the mess — the jagged edges, the masking tape showing along the sides of the photos.

5 The title of this collection is based on Frank O’Hara’s poem “Now That I Am in Madrid and Can Think.”

6 “all my ghosts,” Lizzy McAlpine.

7 *Macbeth*, William Shakespeare.

I read online that my favorite book *Enigma Variations* is being turned into a miniseries with Jeremy Allen White. I think of when I ordered my Nikes and L knew immediately that it was because of this fatal celebrity crush. *Enigma Variations* is Andre Aciman's other book, the one people normally don't read. L loves *Call Me By Your Name*. So do I, really, because of my penchant for falling in love with completely inappropriate candidates.

*Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.*⁸

*Parce-que c'était lui, parce-que c'était moi.*⁹ Beyond proximity, though L was right about that too. *We rip out so much of ourselves to be cured of things faster that we go bankrupt by the age of thirty and have less to offer each time we start with someone new. But to make yourself feel nothing so as not to feel anything — what a waste!*¹⁰

I circled words in my church pamphlet that I didn't understand, so I could go home and look them up later. One of them was "triune" — *consisting of three in one*. Triumvirate. "Troika" was what J called us at lunch, when he posted us on his Instagram. Threes tend to follow me — a chemistry thing.

L played the new Hozier album in the car. "Hymn to Virgil" came on and prompted a round of Googling, of thinking that as a good English major I should probably read some Dante, some *Inferno*. *I would burn the world to bring some heat to you.*¹¹

Hymn to Virgil

Once you said the seventh circle of Hell was there, in that boy's apartment, too sober in a sticky room of heat. Smokey hooded eyes. Hazy conversations. We say it doesn't work unless the house is on fire. *I would burn the world to bring some heat to you*. Shakespeare says *therefore love moderately*. I say I do not know of such a word. For you I'd burn the whole thing down.

L wants to know why Eurydice would follow Orpheus, why Orpheus would turn around every time. Doesn't he love her? Doesn't he *trust* her? She is torn up after seeing *Hadestown*, crying, emerging into Times Square as if into another world.

Disoriented, we argue about the meaning. I send her an old Tumblr post: *to love someone is to turn*

8 Isaiah 43:1.

9 Michel de Montaigne.

10 *Call Me By Your Name*, Andre Aciman.

11 "Hymn to Virgil," Hozier.

around. Because he loves her enough to save her. Because he loves her so much he can't save her.¹²

The Creation of Adam

The destruction of Eve. The Monday afternoon
cold stone, coffee steam, or tea, whichever you like. Green
and films and black and white. I see you and you touch
my face, the side of my face, my sunglasses. Curls. Chestnut
curls and a jingling jacket.

The creation of Adam. The boy —
man in your bed, he wanted to go again, he wanted to eat you
out on the couch, taste your sweetness. Jesus, I would never say it
like that.

The destruction of Eve. Did it hurt when she tasted the
poison. Long hair and she was naked in that garden, made
from Adam's rib, hands reaching, Michelangelo's ceiling. But
in the painting she's nowhere to be found. The mother and the
sister and the daughter, the friend. The closet.

The creation of
Adam. Adam — no self-control — but I guess he waited two years.
Two years. You said, how could he know me? How could he. Know.
Do we ever really. Agony in the details. Strands of my hair in your
hand from where you pulled, I want them back. You're the only — is
this really — how you talk to a friend. Friend.

The destruction of Eve. He
fucked me three times. I faked it once. The second — if — say no. Say
yes.

The creation of Adam. The destruction of Eve.

In the fall I took a class called Shakespeare at the Movies. I liked to picture him, his beard, his one
weird earring, sitting in the movie theatre in a doublet and hose. He'd love Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet*,
throw popcorn at the Cohen brothers' *Macbeth* — too affected. For the exam, we have to identify
passages from different plays. I don't study. The only passage I don't recognize is from *King Lear*:

*This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits of our own
behavior, we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars.*¹³

12 "t's the symbolism, sister," *aaronstveit*, Tumblr.

13 *King Lear*, Shakespeare.

Incision

Topical numbing cream to the area
but the needle stings nonetheless. Pus and
blood, oozing —
inferno. Today we saw David
on the ceiling. The hands of God almost
touching. Calling on tarot cards and

astrological signs and even goddamn
church. When we are sick in fortune, who
to make guilty of these disasters? Waiting for

fresh blood. I am bad at lying even
to you. The sun, the moon, and the stars: and
nefarious behavior if we are even willing. As if

we were villains by necessity. What is right and
what is good, what did you even mean. Hanging
perfectly in balance, all the good perched on the charge
of a star.

—

I look to Shakespeare lines like people look to Bible verses for blessings, for wisdom. Who to make guilty
of our disasters? I am always asking M why, how long. She says, I cannot say that I know how long.

—

I feel like I am slowly regaining my sanity, hence the title: “Now that I am in Glasgow and can think.” But
actually, it’s: “NOW THAT I AM IN GLASGOW AND CAN THINK.” What is art if you are not going
crazy?

Part of the priest’s sermon was about Jesus’ hidden years, which I learn from the internet are the period
between ages twelve and thirty where there is little record of his life. This seems like a large period. Most
of my conscious life has taken place within this period.

The “hidden years” are also known as the “silent years” or “lost years,” which made me think of Lennon’s
lost weekend. Apt, because of the picture of Lennon and Yoko on my wall, the one L ripped from a
magazine. And I’ve been strutting around Glasgow wearing my Lennon-esque sunglasses.

There’s this song by Maisie Peters called “Yoko.” Her ex-boyfriend thought Ono broke up the band,
instead of Lennon, Lennon’s fault, the creation of Adam is always the destruction of Eve. There’s a line:
you have a phone, you should’ve called.

You have a phone. Please don’t call.

L says God has more grace than we can ever understand. M says L makes her believe in God.

I went to church on Sunday — or, I tried to go to church. I showed up at 11am to the one on my way to school, Kelvinbridge I think it's called, which turned out to be closed permanently. So I walked down the street to the next closest one, which is *also* closed permanently. At this point I was pissed and sweating so I ripped out my earbuds because Bob Dylan was too mellow for the vibe of the moment. The church I ended up at was the one I'd already been to. The service was fine I guess.

Blend Statement:

This is a hybrid prose and poetry piece, in the style of a creative nonfiction essay. I grew up in theatre, doing a lot of musicals, where a guiding principle was that when a character can't communicate sufficiently in words, they burst into song. In this vein, for this piece, when I found prose insufficient, I wrote poetry.

Meet Our Contributors

Bhawna Vij Arora

Dr. Bhawna Vij Arora publishes poetry, essays, and articles. Her debut collection *Dreams in My Lap* was shortlisted for the Tagore Prize 2023. She was a Fulbright Language TA at Yale University in the year 2015. In 2023, she published an edited book titled: *Unearthing: Past in Present and Future; Associative Interactions in the Orbit of Memory Studies*. Her third book *From Fin de Siècle to Semi-Centennial Drama of Europe: Dramatic Texts and Perspectives* is slated to be published soon. Currently she is employed as Assistant Professor (Senior) of English at VIPS, GGGSIP University, Delhi.

Michael Bird

Michael Bird is a writer and journalist based between the UK and Romania, with fiction/CNF published in the last two years in *Split Lip*, *Folklore Review*, *Litro*, *PorterHouse Review*, *Mechanics' Institute Review*, and the 'Modern Gothic' anthology for Fly on the Wall Press. As a journalist, he's investigated mafias, vampire-hunters, bear attacks, AI crime, stray dogs and the Ukraine war.

Samantha Carr

Samantha is a PhD Creative Writing candidate at the University of Plymouth, exploring chronic illness through prose poetry. Her work has been published in *Acumen*, *Arc*, *Corporeal*, *Consilience*, and *Ink Sweat and Tears*. In her spare time, Samantha enjoys watching football, walking in nature, wild swimming, and surrealist art. She can be found on Threads and Instagram as @samc4_rr.

Tamsyn Chandler

Tamsyn Chandler is a writer based in London. Her poetry has previously been published in *The Mays*, *Industry Magazine*, *Oblique House*, and with the *Toothgrinder Press*.

Jodie Childers

Jodie Childers is a writer and documentary filmmaker based in New York City and Charlottesville, VA. She is an assistant professor of English at the University of Virginia.

Timothy Dansdill

I was hurt into poetry at 14. My father burned all that I owned and loved at 17. After long wandering and working many menial jobs and manual labor I became addicted to reading and writing across all forms and genres. I ended a long teaching career in 2023, as a Professor of Rhetoric and History of Writing.

Christopher Di Pietro

Chris Di Pietro lived, for most of his life, in the small part of the Appalachian Mountains that passes through New Jersey before coming to the Princeton area. It was there he found a joy in writing for friends through the lens of Dungeons and Dragons games-- a melange, in its own way, that combines storytelling, problem solving, and the wildest ideas.

Ricardo A. Domínguez

Ricardo A. Domínguez, born in Puerto Rico in 1955, possesses a comprehensive academic background that spans a variety of complementary disciplines, including art, literature, and computer science. He has adeptly integrated numerous concepts from these fields into his professional endeavors as a photographer, graphic artist, and writer, skillfully merging his artistic vision with computational tools, graphic arts, and literary expression to enhance the articulation of his ideas. Additionally, he has served as a Spanish professor at Quinnipiac University for a decade.

Sandy Feinstein

Sandy Feinstein is a Pushcart nominee whose first poem from *Chaucer and Me*, on the *Manciple's Tale*, appeared last year in *The Prose Poem*. She presented a draft of the series, a sabbatical project, at the biannual New Chaucer Society Conference this past summer (2024). She teaches both medieval literature and creative writing—together and separately, with the concomitant result of creative critical publications, many co-authored with present and former students, as well as with colleagues.

Paul Green

Paul A. Green's work includes *The Gestaltbunker - Selected Poems* (Shearsman Books 2012), and the novels *The Qliphoth* (Libros Libertad 2007) and *Beneath the Pleasure Zones I and II* (Mandrake 2014, 2016). His plays for radio and stage are collected in *Babalon and Other Plays* (Scarlet Imprint 2015). More at his website: paulgreenwriter.co.uk

Oz Hardwick

Oz Hardwick's prose poems have been published extensively in international journals and anthologies. He is author of several collections - most recently the chapbook *Retrofuturism for the Dispossessed* (Hedgehog, 2024) - and, with Anne Caldwell, is co-editor of *The Valley Press Anthology of Prose Poetry* (Valley, 2019) and *Prose Poetry in Theory and Practice* (Routledge, 2022).

Alice Iriarte

Alice Iriarte is a multimedia artist with insatiable wanderlust who can sometimes be found on cathedral steps and sometimes at truck stops. When she isn't firing clay or soldering stained glass, she's learning her 5th language on Duolingo. Her goal is to travel to every continent, including Antarctica.

Fin Keegan

Fin Keegan lives and works as an editor in the West of Ireland. He has written numerous published poems and stories, along with criticism in *The Irish Times*, the *Irish Arts Review* and the *Dublin Review of Books*.

Chase Klavon

Chase is a recent graduate from Stanford University where she studied English and Psychology. She plans to return in the fall to complete her Master's in Communication.

Rupert Loydell

Rupert Loydell is the editor of Stride magazine, and contributing editor to International Times. He is a widely published poet whose most recent poetry books are *The Age of Destruction and Lies* (2023) and *Damage Limitation* (2025). He also writes about post-punk music, David Lynch, pedagogy and Brian Eno for academic books and journals.

Michael Q. May

Michael Q. May is a sixth year Ph.D. candidate in the Program in Plasma Physics at Princeton. He and his wife love gardening and heading upstate to camp and hike.

Yumiko Nakama

Yumiko Nakama is a psychologist living in Japan. She works at the Tohoku Medical and Pharmaceutical University Hospital, which was built for the reconstruction of the earthquake-stricken area. She has decided to dedicate her life to the recovery from the disaster and the repose of the souls of the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake, and continues to create and present her work to pass the disaster on to future generations.

Jasmine Parsons

Jasmine Parsons is a PhD student in theoretical high-energy astrophysics at Princeton University, originally from Montréal, Québec.

Roya Reese

Roya Reese '26 is a junior from Philly in the English department, also pursuing certificates in Creative Writing and Persian Language. She loves to read, write, swim, and argue about Taylor Swift's lyrical talent and cultural significance.

Erin Scothorn

Erin Scothorn is an interdisciplinary writer/artist/performer who works in a variety of different media, including painting, prosthetics, sculpting, and interactive theatre. Her work is shaped by her ongoing desire to travel and learn by connecting with others around the world through shared stories and experiences. Even after a BA in English, Medieval Studies, and History, she is still fascinated by how people and places change (or not) over time.

Urvi Sharma

Dr. Urvi Sharma currently teaches Creative Writing and Popular Literature at School of Languages and Culture, Amity University Punjab. She is the author of *The Unsuitable Girl: Critical Reception of Arundhati Roy* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2024) and co-editor of *Simmering Silences and Beneath: Gender Studies in India* (2022). She is the Editorial Board Member of Rajpath Publishers (Nigeria) and Executive Board Member of Creative Writing Studies Organisation (USA). Poetry for her is a vessel to hold emotions too fluid for academic writing, her earnest attempt to give shape to the ineffable.

Steven Strange

Steven Strange is a retired post-secondary school and university teacher of Spanish language and literature with a B.A. from the State University of New York in Oswego, an M.A. from Pennsylvania State University, an M.S. from Central Connecticut State University, and a certificate of study from the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica in Madrid. He is currently a Miembro Correspondiente of the Academia Norteamericana de la Lengua Española, an active member of the Asociación de Licenciados y Doctores Españoles en EEUU, past president, vice-president, and secretary of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, and a member of the Connecticut Council of Language Teachers. In addition to his many published articles, essays, and poetry both in Spanish and English, he has also done English translations of *Escuadra hacia la muerte* and *La Estrella de Sevilla*, both of which have been published. The North American Academy of the Spanish Language published his anthology entitled *Antes de Jamestown, fue San Agustín de la Florida* (2021) which is available online.

Sam Szanto

Sam Szanto is an award-winning, Pushcart prize-nominated writer living in Durham (UK). Her poetry pamphlet 'This Was Your Mother' was published by Dreich Press in 2024; 'Splashing Pink' was published by Hedgehog Press in 2023 and was a Poetry Book Society Winter Pamphlet Choice; her debut short-story collection 'If No One Speaks' was published by Alien Buddha Press.

Jes Wittig

Jes Wittig was raised by wolves. She holds a BA in Dance from Hofstra University, an MA in Religion from Columbia University, half an MFA in Dance from Sarah Lawrence College, and a cup of loose tuna. Her favorite animal is the octopus.

"I love how you've opened up the journal to all kinds of multimedia art, and I

“I love how you’ve opened up the journal to all kinds of multimedia art, and that you ask each contributor to provide an artist’s statement to help situate their work. It strikes me that you’ve managed to create a journal that is itself the perfect blend of scholarly, critical, creative, and practice-oriented interests. Congratulations.”

- Kinohi Nishikawa,
Professor of English and African American Studies,
Princeton University