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Pablo and Celia

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Pablo and Celia

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Abstract

Pablo and Celia, my collection of lyric poems, is composed in several voices, but the personae Pablo and Celia remain the focus. The collection is a sequence formed of both discrete, untitled fragments and more traditionally titled poems that follow the narrative arc of Pablo and Celia's relationship as they think aloud or write one another. They speak directly and generally in their own syntax and forms, but this rule is violated when they "steal" one another's voice, as in "Celia on Celia." There is an element of chaos in terms of formal properties between poems and voices as each persona and each poem creates its own rules of play. Sometimes the persona's imagination transports her or him outside of his or her normal modes of speech, but, generally, certain conventions cohere around each persona, modes of syntax particularly, that relate to their different processes for apprehending the world. Pablo seeks to rethink, if not remake, the world, a normative approach that tries to adapt the world to the ego. His voice typically presents a clipped syntax and associative process of connection between images. Celia, on the other hand, seeks to merge with the physical, often natural world, a submerging of ego to the beauty around her. Her voice usually presents itself in prose with longer sentences, surrealist logic, and a lush soundscape in comparison to Pablo's. Both struggle to understand themselves and their place in this moment rife with physical and intellectual violence.

The poems are prefaced by a theory of play; although most of my readings are drawn from the more radical end of the spectrum, my purpose in this exploration is not to privilege one system of versification over others. Rather, I would like to demonstrate how those radical strategies fit into the larger tradition by reading poems along a spectrum of sense-making. I propose the following introduction to play as both my own personal poetics and as a theory to frame an inclusive approach to poetry.

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Serious Play

“the play’s the thing / Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king”

—Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

I

An analysis of play suggests continuities across time and national boundaries and emphasizes a shared set of values between various poetic camps: Metaphysical conceits, traditional rhyme schemes, Organicism, and L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry’s incorporation of commercial slogans all share an engagement with imaginative play. Both the British-Romantic strand, often called *mainstream* (e.g. Blake, Roethke, Berryman, or Carson), and the French-experimental, or *avant-garde*, engage language as an element in play; focusing on play also highlights the continuities presented in post-millennial hybridizations. In this light, it makes sense to speak of a spectrum of practices, or degrees of practice, in terms of the exercise of imagination in a poetics. On one end of the spectrum we find works that value clarity of expression, a message, and thus may be said to participate in the act of sense-making. On the other end, we find works that downplay clarity and prioritize process over message, and thus may be described as reconfiguring or resisting the act of sense-making.

Play, or playfulness, is often regarded as unimportant in our culture. In response to such assumptions, Johan Huizinga argues that play preceded culture and served as one of the primary elements in its development. In *Homo Ludens*, Huizinga offers an elegant definition of play:

Summing up the formal characteristic of play, we might call it a free activity

standing quite consciously outside “ordinary” life as being “not serious” but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings that tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress the difference from the common world by disguise or other means. (13)

His definition can be broken into four parts. The first two premises, that play is “free activity . . . outside ‘ordinary’ life” and that play is without “material interest,” recalls the traditional role culture subscribes to play. It is the opposite of work, of productivity. This is where Roger Caillois, after praising Huizinga’s research into play as a formative factor of culture, subtly withdraws all support for Huizinga’s project: “a characteristic of play, in fact, is that it creates no wealth or goods, thus differing from work or art. . . . Nothing has been harvested or manufactured, no masterpiece was created, no capital has accrued. Play is an occasion of pure waste: waste of time, energy, ingenuity, skill, and often money” (5-6). Huizinga’s argument is that culture is a result of play, that without play there wouldn’t be any masterpieces, no art whatsoever.¹ At one point, after another restatement of the above definition of play,² he writes, “the definition we have just given of play might serve as a definition of poetry” (132). Caillois’ revision of the definition is also significant; and in understanding play and its value in culture, both are informative. Huizinga’s opinion more closely mirrors my own; Caillois’s argument reflects the more generally held position that play is wasteful, and not really for adults.

Caillois also takes exception to Huizinga’s third premise, in that it occurs “according to fixed rules.” He argues, “Many games do not imply rules. No fixed or rigid rules exist for

¹ Kant: “**Taste** is the faculty of judging an object or a kind of representation through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction **without any interest**. The object of such satisfaction is called **beautiful**” (5: 211; his emphasis).

² Huizinga, “[Play] is an activity which proceeds within certain limits of time and space, in a visible order, according to rules freely accepted, and outside the sphere of necessity or material utility. The play-mood is one of rapture and enthusiasm, and is sacred or festive in accordance with the occasion. A feeling of exaltation and tension

playing with dolls, for playing soldiers . . . games, in general, which presuppose free improvisation” (8). The idea of “Free improvisation” demonstrates the limitations of Caillois’ earlier reformulation and also the generally accepted conception of play, for “Free improvisation” describes many of the artistic practices of the last century (e.g. jazz or Fluxus). Huizinga’s last premise gives me some pause. I cannot personally advocate the formation of social groupings that “tend to surround themselves with secrecy” and yet the secret society doesn’t seem to be his intent for to “stress the difference from the common world by disguise or other means” betrays the secrecy. Caillois notes the same complication, but with different emphasis: “without doubt, secrecy, mystery, and even travesty can be transformed into play activity, but it must be immediately pointed out that this transformation is necessarily to the detriment of the secret and mysterious, which play exposes, publishes, and somehow *expends*” (4). He sees this as a flaw in Huizinga’s logic—as if “secret society” meant conspiracy, but Huizinga’s use of this phrase is vague and receives almost no other attention in *Homo Ludens*. In fact, he rewords his definition of play several times but without the conspiratorial “secret society,”³ suggesting that Huizinga’s understanding of “secret society” pertains to role-playing games, acting, or membership in a sacred society, such as the Eleusinian mysteries of ancient Greece—activities in all cases where an individual’s identity is publicly known and the ‘veil’ is a continuation of the play.⁴ Moreover, it includes contemporary religious rituals, where one steps outside “ordinary time” to enter a sacred space outside time.⁵ The seriousness of this sacred set

accompanies the action, mirth and relaxation follow” (132).

³ (Huizinga 28, 132)

⁴ Huizinga description of children’s play is telling here and prepares for his larger argument for the play-element in the social and sacred festivals and rituals: “Even in early childhood the charm of play is enhanced by making a ‘secret’ out of it. [. . .]. Inside the circle of the game the laws and customs of ordinary life no longer count” (12).

⁵ cf. Mircea Eliade: “sacred time is indefinitely recoverable, indefinitely repeatable. From one point of view it could be said that it does not ‘pass,’ that it does not constitute an irreversible duration. It is an ontological, Parmenidean time; it always remains equal to itself, it neither changes nor is exhausted” (69). Compare this to Csikszentmihalyi’s

of activities suggests a greater importance to play than it would normally be granted.

To describe a version of this other kind of play that does not fall into the category *sacred*, I use the adjective *serious*, by which I mean a variation of Cole Swenson's (implicit) definition of poetry from *Hybrid American*, as "committed to the emotional spectra of lived experience" (xxi). Although the phrase *serious play* is often used in relation to avant-garde experimentation, I am arguing for a broader definition to highlight the historical continuities between traditional and more radical kinds of play.

Play in poetry engages at least one of four concerns in terms of representation: language, self, form, and logic.⁶ These concerns also describe the elements by which the act of sense-making may be embraced or challenged, but play occurs at both ends of the spectrum. Terrance Hayes' poetry fully participates in the act of sense-making while also demonstrating a significant investment in playfulness. Take the opening poem, "Lighthouse's Guide to the Galaxy," from his most recent collection, *Lighthouse*, for example. He engages the self via persona and worries about language and self: "I know all words come from preexisting words / and divide until our pronouncements develop selves" (14-15). Language itself is taken mostly at face value, but its transparency is called into question: "I'd rather have what my daddy calls / 'skrimp.' He says 'discrete' and means the street / just out of sight" (17-19). The language play, the remapping of

flow theory, which seeks to describe the experience of timelessness during engaging activities: "In the flow state, action follows upon action according to an internal logic that seems to need no conscious intervention by the actor. He experiences it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which he is in control of his actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment, between stimulus and response, or between past, present, and future" (36).

⁶ Wittgenstein identifies the same four concerns for philosophy. While these terms, when applied to philosophy, have distinct connotations, they are also analogous to those they might convey when applied to poetry: language and self, "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (5.6); form, "It is impossible to distinguish forms from one another by saying that one has this property and another that property: for this presupposes that it makes sense to ascribe either property to either form" (4.1241); and logic, "It is clear, however, that logic has nothing to do with whether our world is really like that or not" (6.1233).

sound and sense, belongs within the dialect of a specific speaker, and as the line continues it ties that play to the reworking of logic: “Not what you see, but what you perceive: / that’s poetry. Not the noise, but its rhythm; an arrangement / of derangements” (19-21). He shares a concern for the role of ego in art: “Maybe Art’s only purpose is to preserve the Self” (26). In terms of formal play, this poem may be a poor choice, since it follows the rhetorical movement of blank verse, which, while perfectly appropriate, isn’t as playful as his borrowing/adaptation of the *pecha kucha*⁷ in other poems from this book; however, this poem presents the playfulness of his imagery well: “Sometimes I play a game in which my primitive craft fires / upon an alien ship whose intention is the destruction / of the earth” (27-29). Its conception engages the role of ego in its replay of a pop culture motif and this quality of conceptual play is what I most admire in Hayes’ work.

Toward the more radical end of the spectrum, poems reconfigure or resist the value for clarity of expression, the use of ‘I’ to represent a stable, singular persona, formal balance, or a recognizable correspondence to reality. Gertrude Stein’s works typically play with all four:

A Carafe, That Is a Blind Glass

A kind in glass and a cousin, a spectacle and nothing strange a single hurt color and an arrangement in a system to pointing. All this and not ordinary, not unordered in not resembling. The difference is spreading. (*Selected* 461)

As a representation of spilled wine, it reorders language from descriptive to gestural. Rather than using language to name objects and processes—nouns and verbs as nouns and verbs—Stein’s language “points” at how language refers, while evoking a puddle of wine: “The difference is spreading.” This use of language reworks the reader’s expectations of linear logic in favor of the oblique. It conjures the physical through abstraction as opposed to the concretion of names and

⁷ Hayes describes the *pecha kucha* as “a Japanese business presentation format wherein the presenter narrates or riffs on twenty images connected to a single theme for twenty seconds at a time” (94).

narrative description. Form follows suit, “spreading” a block of ‘prose’ text. As for self, there isn’t any claim to a self, no lyric “I” lurking behind the observation.⁸

The difficulty of presenting experience through language is one of the primary concerns of most poetics, and, often, though not always, linguistic play challenges claims that language represents the physical world. In Stein’s (in)famous formulation:

Can’t you see that when the language was new—as it was with Chaucer and Homer—the poet could use the name of a thing and the thing was really there? He could say ‘O moon,’ ‘O sea,’ ‘O love’ and the moon and sea and love were really there. And can’t you see that after hundreds of years had gone by and thousands of poems had been written, he could call on those words and find that they were just worn-out literary words? (*Four v*)

This concern for representation denies language the ability to present its corresponding object.

Word and world become separate and play teases the gap, sometimes to expose and sometimes to traverse the distance, and, occasionally, through a conscious act of will, trick the gap into appearing closed, a conscious wink.⁹

⁸ cf. Lacan, “far from exhausting itself, [. . .], once the image has been mastered and found empty, immediately rebounds in the case of the child in a series of gestures in which he experiences in play the relation between the movements assumed in the image and the reflected environment, and between this virtual complex and the reality it reduplicates—the child’s own body, and the persons and things, around him” (1).

⁹ cf. Geertz’s paraphrase of Ryles: “Consider, he says, two boys rapidly contracting the eyelids of their right eyes. In one, this is an involuntary twitch; in the other, a conspiratorial signal to a friend. The two movements are, as movements, identical; from an I-am-a-camera, ‘phenomenalistic’ observation of them alone, one could not tell which was twitch and which was wink, or indeed whether both or either was twitch or wink. Yet the difference, however unphotographable, between a twitch and a wink is vast; as anyone unfortunate enough to have had the first taken for the second knows. [. . .]. That, however, is just the beginning. Suppose, he continues, there is a third boy, who, ‘to give malicious amusement to his cronies,’ parodies the first boy’s wink, as amateurish, clumsy, obvious, and so on. He, of course, does this in the same way the second boy winked and the first twitched: by contracting his right eyelids. Only this boy is neither winking nor twitching, he is parodying someone else’s, as he takes it, laughable, attempt at winking. Here, too, a socially established code exists (he will ‘wink’ laboriously, over-obviously, perhaps adding a grimace—the usual artifices of the clown); and so also does a message” (6).

Roethke's use of nursery rhyme and Freudian symbol in the *Lost Son* sequence

demonstrates one approach to language as serious play. In "Bring the Day!" the persona has had a romantic encounter in the first section, then a moment of insecurity in the second:

When I stand, I'm almost a tree.
Leaves, do you like me any?
A swan needs a pond.
The worm and the rose
Both love
Rain. (2. 8-13)

The persona experiences a moment of elation expressed through the comparison of self to "tree" and promptly worries that the feeling might not be reciprocated. At times, the nouns take on symbolic properties: "worm" and "rose" are repeated throughout the sequence. While the worm conveys a sense of the chthonic and its connotation of death, the afterlife, and "rose" temporal beauty, *le joie de vivre*, they often appear together at moments of sexual encounters, adding a second connotation of cycle, renewal. Here, "Rain" makes that sense explicit, entailing the traditional association of rain as productive, fertile. There's no Poundian "direct treatment of the thing" (Pound 3), and the emotions are suggested by the figurations in context.

More radical challenges to semantics and syntax privilege sound over sense: "sweet sweet sweet sweet tea. / Susie Asado" (Stein, *Selected* 549); often language play challenges conventional representations of self as in this fragment from Susan Howe's "Melville's Marginalia":

Narcis if I h
"Forct" in copy
"h" from bough
Thissby this
hishis spirit
I th For th (127)

where language becomes code, a game of make-sense analogous to nursery rhymes. Here the self is also at issue, “Narcis if I h”: a worry about one’s own ego, Narcissus as emblem, the love of one’s own image. A concern for imposing that “I” on the reader: “‘Forct’ in copy / ‘h’ from bough” as exploitation, and worse, exploitation for cultural/poetic cachet, as in *see I’m sensitive, a poet*.¹⁰ The thing caught in writing is but part of a whole, a “bough.” “Thissby” suggests Thisbe, the mythological figure who takes her own life in the wake of her lover’s suicide. Writing, then, as a sacrifice of life for love, but the “hishis” doubles Narcissus with Pyramus. The stanza ends with an assertion, “I th For th,” trading “I” as x-entity for another x-entity. Following the form of the argument, “If I am the N / This is an error / Fy” (127) plays on the Capital N in refutation of the I as Narcissist, the noun, the nominative, source and center of narrative. The emphasis on language as arbitrary and constructed foregrounds the arbitrariness of human conception, convention, and self.

Although ‘closed’ forms inherently offer opportunities for reconfiguring convention, my interest at this moment focuses on the playfulness of organicism or composition by field. Charles Olson’s emphasis on the syllable and on the page as score as well as the correspondence, whether mimetic or not, of prosody/form to the world represented suggests a reconfiguring of form as a construct of meaning. Even while smacking of a certain Romantic certainty: “the HEAD, by way of the EAR, to the SYLLABLE / the HEART, by way of the BREATH, to the LINE” (“Projective” 242), it asserts the solidity of the physical world in the same way as Williams, when he exclaims, “no ideas, but in things” (“Paterson” 264). It evokes the physical

¹⁰ cf. Bourdieu’s “art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimation of social differences” (*Distinction* 7).

via an abstract coherence between form and content.¹¹ Coordinated as a rhythmic construct,¹² Olson's composition by Open Field shifts the emphasis to structure as message: in Olson's case as "mu-sick, mu-sick, mu-sick" ("I, Maximus" 82).

Leslie Scalapino's "Bum Series" plays with form as a conceptual construct, where each stanza presents a version of a recurring thought, a thinking through. Formed of two or three discrete stanzas per page, each revises an earlier stanza:

the men—when I'd
been out in the cold weather—were
found lying on the street, having
died—from the weather; though
usually being there when it's warmer

the men
on the street who'd
died—in the weather—who're bums
observing it, that instance
of where they are—not my
seeing that (1-11)

The number and length of the lines vary, mirroring the process of thought as themes repeat, slightly altered with each new occurrence. This organic mimesis of the process of thought demonstrates Olson's influence, recalling Denise Levertov's reformulation of Olson's "principle" of organic form: "form is never more than a *revelation* of content" (Levertov 73),

¹¹ Olson credits Creeley with his formulation of the principle, "Form is never more than an extension of content" ("Projective Verse" 240).

¹² cf. Lakoff and Johnson's "our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (3). Further, they argue that "*no metaphor can ever be comprehended or even adequately represented independently of its experiential basis*" (their emphasis 19). Kövecses extends the argument, "metaphors must be realized not only in language but also in other areas of human experience" (57).

where the form here reveals process as content. Form, in this sense, participates in the logic of the poem as a whole, even contributes to its generative energy.¹³

Fundamental to my idea of play, logic-games reconfigure the act of sense-making itself. John Donne's conceits play logic-games by juxtaposing disparate ideas and objects to form rhetorically sophisticated arguments. "The Flea," for example, serves as the medium for a seduction. The persona remarks that the flea has bit both man and woman and addresses the flea directly: "Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare, / Where we almost, yea more than married are"(10-11). Not only does the flea become an embodiment of both lovers, it also parallels the three in one trinity. The lovers are in that sense "more than married"; they are one holy being. She kills the flea which prompts the argument's final thrust: "'Tis true; then learn how false, fears be; / Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me, / Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee" (25-7). Donne's logic game marshals the rules to its own advantage, bending expectations of propriety into a *tour de force* of logic and wit.

Surrealism's challenges to rationality, logic, *sense* provide an approach in defiance of traditional notions of narrative discourse, image, and overall sense-making that underpins the notion of play as a governing concept for my own work. Sense itself and the making-of-sense remain the primary game by which a work engages the world as a represented and representable entity, reconfiguring the *sine qua non* of communication. For the sake of coherence, here is André Breton's "Vigilance" in its entirety:

In Paris the tower Saint-Jacques tottering
Like a sunflower
With its forehead comes sometimes to strike the Seine and its shadow glides
imperceptibly among tugboats
At this moment, tiptoe in my sleep

¹³ Traditional forms, such as the sonnet or villanelle, provide the same contribution to the logic of their poems. Part of what makes Olson's proposal radical, and specifically useful to my work, is the demand that each poem create its own, distinct structural/formal logic.

I move through the room where I am lying
 And set it on fire
 So that nothing survives of that consent torn from me
 The furniture gives way to animals of the same size who watch me
 fraternally
 Lions in manes that finish consuming the chairs
 Sharks whose white bellies incorporate the last rustle of sheets
 At the hour of love and blue eyelids
 I see myself burning in turn I see that solemn hiding place of nothings
 Who was my body
 Excavated by the patient beaks of ibises of fire
 When all is finished I enter invisible the ark
 Without attention to the passersby of life who sound
 very far their footsteps dragging
 I see the fishbones of the sun
 Through the hawthorn of rain
 I hear the human linen tearing itself like a great leaf
 Under the claw of absence and presence who connive
 All the professions fade there remains of them only that one perfumed lace
 A shell of lace that has the perfect form of a breast
 I touch no more than the heart of things I hold the thread.¹⁴

The title suggests awareness, a wariness, yet the persona presents itself as the agent of violence, the threat, and through this violence the persona breaks itself free from “the passersby of life” (15) and undertakes a journey where it watches its body burn. Freed from the constraint of the body, the persona claims, “I touch no more than the heart of things I hold the thread” (22). It speaks from outside life, and although death is implied, the poem denies the logical finality of self-immolation, suggesting instead a molting, a shedding of an outer layer. This thread of thought is commonplace enough now¹⁵ that the overarching message does not seem to violate conventional standards of sense-making, but the steps to that break and their accompanying images, lions’ manes eating furniture, sharks as sheets, violate the basic presupposition that language communicates clearly and directly, that the premises of an argument follow, logically, to the conclusion. It violates the expectation that a poem will represent reality: that the language

¹⁴ My translation.

and objects of the world in the poem will correspond to what we know of those objects and their properties, their behavior outside the poem.

II

I locate *Pablo and Celia* somewhere in the middle of this schema of play, and offer it as an exploration of some of the range available to these elements of representation. This is also to locate the manuscript in a larger tradition, not limited to one national discourse or one interpretation of one national discourse. My poems draw as much from traditional poetic strategies of the US and Britain as they do from the experimental traditions of France, and so they fit within the trend of my generation to seek models across the poetic divide, to learn from both Harryette Mullen and Robert Frost, for example; with the exception that in my case it seems more applicable to describe the range as Tony Harrison and Vénus Khoury-Ghata. It is through these diverse models that I have come to privilege play in my own work as a means of addressing a personal experience of some of the issues and American discourse since 9/11.

Henri Michaux's conceptual reworking of the objects of the world, and the self as an object of study, has been a major influence on my conception of play. To read Michaux is to inhabit an extraordinary world, one that is familiar and strange. The figures are rarely analogous to specific people or events, yet they recall specific events and our own efforts to know the world we inhabit. His work often engages other modes of discourse (ethnography or criticism, for example), absorbing the exterior world into the psyche and expressing it in the private, idiosyncratic language of an interior reality. The objects, places, and people of the external world

¹⁵ As *The Doors* so famously phrased it "Break on through to the other side."

are reconfigured according to an imaginary, emotional reality and expressed as an extension of the persona's own existence, projecting the interior world as reality.

The dislocation of *réalité* for *rêve*¹⁶ occurs immediately and continuously in Michaux's work through the fragmented and multiple, yet readily identifiable persona. Raymond Bellour comments that "*c'est presque toujours la règle des qu'il y a création littéraire, aucune disparité entre des écrits objectifs dus à l'imagination et des écrits subjectifs doués de réalité intime. La dualité du je esthétique et du je de confession se résout chez Michaux dans un incessant mouvement de contamination qui finit par rendre tout divorce illusoire*" (38).¹⁷ I particularly like the choice of *contamination* to describe the state of existing in rupture, and it is the same contamination that I claim as the key influence to the conceptual shifting that occurs in my own poems. My *I* also suffers from this contamination but not to the same extent as Michaux. Despite the depth of his influence on me, my project is different. I am not seeking to explore the limits of the multitudinous self, Rimbaud's "*je est un autre*" (Rimbaud 347), that Michaux explored so thoroughly. For me multiplicity of self is a given. I follow his example in that my contamination also occurs in the persona's relation to reality. Celia continually transforms herself into other things, while Pablo transforms everything into himself. Their desires/fears manifest literally in their reality—there is no barrier between their imagination and life. This is my definition of conceptual play: an engagement in another set of metaphysics whose rules are altered according to an imagined subjectivity that *exists* in language. For me, this game of make-believe mirrors the make-believe of the utopian impulse and its desire to reimagine the world.

¹⁶ Breton, "Je crois à la résolution future de ces deux états, en apparence si contradictoires, que sont le rêve et la réalité, en une sorte de réalité absolue" (*Manifestes* 24). "I believe in the future resolution of these two states, in apparence so contradictory, dream and reality, in a sort of absolute reality" (my translation).

¹⁷ "It is almost always the rule since there has been literary creation, no disparity between objective writings belonging to the imagination and subjective writings imbued by an intimate reality. The duality of the aesthetic I and the confessional I resolves in Michaux in an incessant movement of contamination that ends by rendering any

Although I cannot claim Fernando Pessoa as an influence (having discovered his heteronyms after writing *Pablo and Celia*), we share a significant similarity in our approach to self: what Ciuraru formulates as “to pretend is to know oneself.” Pessoa’s explanation of heteronym could be used to describe my conception of persona: “Pseudonymous works are by the author in his own person, except in the name he signs; heteronymic works are by the author outside his own person. They proceed from a full-fledged individual created by him, like the lines spoken by a character in a drama he might write” (Pessoa 3). I do not try to publish in the name of Pablo or Celia the way he published poems as Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reiss, or Álvaro de Campos, but I conceive of my personae as whole personalities themselves, speaking directly through the page their idiosyncratic responses to the early 21st century.

OULIPO, an international association dedicated to exploring the possibilities of poetic constraints, has also influenced my poetics of play. It may seem ironic that a manuscript I describe as chaotic could claim a group dedicated to a scientific method of producing poetry as an influence, but their methods suggest another approach to poetic form as a space for play. While I often employ OULIPEAN strategies (homophonics and syntactic rules, in particular),¹⁸ my writing almost always begins as an automatic process, and this is another debt I owe to Surrealism and Dada: beginning without conscious ego. Unlike Surrealism proper, I do not seek to create a rupture between *rêve et réalité*; that rupture already exists. My poems seek to marshal the ephemeral fluctuations in that rupture in order to recast *réalité* from a different perspective, that of an imagined subjectivity. Sometimes the arbitrary constraints or other rule-based strategies I employ serve as access to the automatic state. The constraints or games also provide

divorce illusory” (my translation).

¹⁸ Two homophonics are included in *Pablo and Celia*: “Song for a Surly Nation” is loosely based on Pushkin’s “The Bronze Horseman” and “Sense,” in the appendix *Early Experiments*, is based on Marcin Jagodziński’s “A Poem for Marta Podgórnik.”

a critical lens through which to approach revision. Sometimes I “discover” a rule that has mostly been applied or partially applied through the automatic process that I can then consciously exploit. This could be called a formal contamination, hybridizing opposing processes, one emphasizing irrationality and unpredictability and the other dedicated to methodical exploration of mathematical systems with the intent to create a stable and replicable process, one which is simultaneously organic and artificial.

There is, of course, another approach drawing on OULIPO as a precursor. Kenneth Goldsmith’s *Uncreative Writing* presents an entirely different mode of play for some of the same reasons, but his enthusiasm for technology seems to blind him to some of the historical precursors to the kind of “uncreative” writing he champions. The Romans certainly did not have word processing programs and yet they developed the cento, a poetic form of 100 lines composed entirely of lines lifted from Greek poets.¹⁹ The burden of working in this form is only slightly lessened by twentieth century technology. Even if we share many goals, and even techniques at times, I cannot find anything laudable or even remotely desirable in a robopoetics: poetry written by machines for machines.²⁰ Frankly, there’s no self interest in it. Nor is it even a question of answering his championing of Bök’s hyperbole. (As yet we have not succeeded in creating an artificial intelligence.) However, the contention that he and Perloff share concerning genius redefined as information processing suggests a machine mentality;²¹ and while the gesture itself offers a corrective to the current definition based on self-expression, the consequences

¹⁹ For one of my centos, see “At the Hour of Love and Blue Eyelids” in the appendix *Early Experiments*.

²⁰ Christian Bök: “What have we to lose by writing poetry for a robotic culture that must inevitably succeed our own?” (17).

²¹ Goldsmith 1-2; and Perloff’s *Unoriginal Genius*: “Once we grant that current art practices have their own particular momentum and *inventio*, we can dissociate the word *original* from its partner *genius*. If the new ‘conceptual’ poetry makes no claim to originality—at least not originality in the usual sense—this is not to say that *genius* isn’t in play. It just takes different forms” (21). Despite my protests, I think that it is only reasonable to include both versions in the definition of genius.

seem far worse than the ego-glorification of the current Romantic definition. What role can poetry play in life if relegated to machines? Moreover, writing for a future machine culture implies that one writes for immortality alone, which seems an even greater glorification of the ego.²² Even if that ego is unidentifiable, the attribution to an author remains (e.g. Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries or RACTER or Eliza). In the process both the Romantic conception of “unproclaimed legislator” (Shelley 508) and avant-garde political action become irrelevant, so it is not a question of original versus unoriginal writing as Goldsmith contends. Despite this key difference we share similar concerns, including a spectrum approach to sense-making (Goldsmith 35), a skepticism regarding a stable ego (7, 83), and probably most significant, that “*context is the new content*” (3, his emphasis). Sometimes, we even share strategies; after all, managing plagiarism invites some imaginative approaches to play.²³ In the end, however, I am invested in the imagination of original production (with the difficulty that *nihil sub sole novum*²⁴): where maybe only context changes—the way an idea/object/feeling is reframed in the imagining.²⁵

If I can critique Goldsmith on the grounds of poetry’s role in life what role do I ascribe? None specifically. However, I write for people and that is a social act. It is a political act. It occurs in a context of living people and issues and a tradition of aesthetic production.²⁶ I can choose to address the issues and ideas of my lifetime or not. Both are political and social choices. I try to capture most of that cultural material: environmental concerns, media and political

²² Bök: “Is it not already evident by our presence at conferences on digital poetics that the poets of tomorrow are likely to resemble programmers, exalted, not because they can write great poems, but because they can build a small drone out of words to write great poems for us?” (17)

²³ Goldsmith praises Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* (109), and it stresses our similarities to note that my use of quotations in the footnotes here owes a debt to the strategy of Benjamin’s text.

²⁴ *Ecclesiastes* 1.9: “There’s nothing new under the sun.”

²⁵ The shifts, over time, in the representation of the rose, for example.

²⁶ Eliot, “what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them” (5).

schism and dogmatism, mediation itself, etc. . . . in the forms of my poems, particularly in the cultural forms captured in my poems (e.g. the “distillation” of tv genres in “The Manifesto of Pablo Sheezbeen”). Do I have to? Of course not. But I too find myself concerned with the political action inherent to aesthetics and aesthetic production—to the representation of a self speaking to an audience, to the complications of living in community.

Representation of the self speaking to an audience entails certain ethical risks. Dare I follow the Romantics in their presentation of the self as always innocent and trustworthy, a paragon of wisdom reflecting on nature or the past? Or even the Confessional poets, who at least represented their own imperfections? Both approaches engage a stable identity that parallels poet with persona, so neither solution seems appropriate for me. Goldsmith identifies the problem I have with both of these approaches:

Often—mostly unconsciously—I’ll model my identity of myself on some image that I’ve been pitched to by an advertisement. When I’m trying on clothes in a store, I will bring forth that image that I’ve seen in an ad and mentally insert myself and my image into it. It’s all fantasy. I would say that an enormous part of my identity has been adopted from advertising. I very much live in this culture; how could I possibly ignore such powerful forces? (84)

This seems a trenchant critique of a large percentage of writing. Poems today so often seem to adopt a similar persona while pretending to present a unique identity. They speak to us in voice of the poet—the image of which is largely derived from a simplification of the Romantic persona and the cults of genius and personality. *Read me because of who I am*, but what’s the draw when it is the same simulacrum of personality²⁷ as the next person? In *Pablo and Celia*, I approached this problem through personae, ironically including the poet in that role in “Self-Portrait of the Poet Persona.”

²⁷ cf. Baudrillard: “The real is produced from miniaturized units, from matrices, memory banks and command models—and with these it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times. [. . .]. In fact, *since it is no longer enveloped in an imaginary, it is no longer real at all*” (170; my emphasis).

III

Emphasizing play, my poetics involves shifting representational strategies across poems through experiments with personae, linguistic and imagistic fragmentation, rhythm, and form. Logic is subsumed to the persona, obeying the idiosyncratic process of each speaker's psyche. Structurally, the fragments cohere around a dynamic, unifying metaphor. Pablo's channel surfing, for example, provides a medium against which the diverse forms/modes accumulate as a single entity. Reworking metaphysics according to an imagined persona's subjectivity involves the poetic process in an act of make-believe whereby culture and the pretense of its discourse and media may be critically examined.

American culture (at least as viewed through mogul media outlets) pretends to take its discourse seriously, but it takes its position-taking more seriously than the discourse. Not that the combatants arguing their talking points don't feel seriously about what they say. They do, but not seriously enough to listen to ideas outside their own ideological box. The ideas are the same no matter who's speaking, at least within each "brand." Therefore, what's most important is the delivery of the talking point. In focusing on their presentation, these talking heads participate in a play activity: the representation of their ideology. They take on the role prescribed by the "culture wars," which are motivated by the utopian impulse: *if things were like x, the world would be a better place*. What could be more serious and more fanciful at the same time? It's this mode of discourse, this role-playing that "The Manifesto of Pablo Sheezbeen" mimics.

My political critique differs from previous criticisms by focusing on delivery, the cultural form and tone, as opposed to linguistic content. The focus in "The Manifesto of Pablo Sheezbeen" is the tone of exclusion, the *with us or against us* rhetoric that has dominated our discourse since 9/11. Also, I incorporated in that poem the national mode of avoidance—

television programming—which is remediated in mimicking the metaphysics of the diverse genres available in that medium. My intention was never to defy the act of sense-making, but often the gestural nature of some of my images and language use has resulted in a less than straight-forward presentation of message. This aspect of political critique wasn't a conscious axis of my poetics, but in retrospect it does seem inevitable that a critique of public discourse and its ideologically narrow talking points would begin to resist clear message making.

An example from “The Manifesto of Pablo Sheezbeen,” “[kissing babies in the spotlight],” mimics the metaphysics of a political spot in a direct criticism of the intellectual assault political posturing enacts against public consciousness:

We must learn to be impassive.
Impassible. We mean infallible.

Moonrise at sea.

Composed empty gestures.
Never offending never startling.

Unmoving Q.

Pablo sees a correlation between the waves rippling in the moon's reflection and the individual's relation to the body politic. The address begins in a familiar first person plural, “we,” but as the words shift sound/sense the second “we” changes tone, suggesting instead a royal “we” who insists on being “infallible.” Both instances of “we” are juxtaposed to the image of the moon's reflection in the sea, so that the “unmoving Q” is both an image of the moon's reflection slightly distorted in the waves and also a play on the sound of *q*—queue, to stand in line.

Later, Pablo remediates a commercial, actually the Mazda “Zoom Zoom” campaign, to advertise his brand of *what's wrong with the world* (and unwittingly himself). I actually hope that the allusion is obvious; it's meant to be, partly out of admiration for the pleasure the

designer takes in the sound of the word, a synesthesia that almost feels like fun itself; and in that formulation capturing speed and joy, I find an opportunity to repurpose the phrase to emphasize the difference between a pleasure that distracts and a pleasure that engages:

[*Shoo Shoo*]

flip the
channel make it

nothing but view

slot canyons and hairless peaks

tattooed slogans marked ™
billboards blocking good shot

bare navel
the valley I mean

hazards thinking or acting

shrieking siren's call
bomb shelter skull

This is an example where I applied a syntactic constraint in the process of revision, which was *no complete sentences*. After several revisions it became a clinamen, which fits the repeated slip between desire and control in its resistance of the totality of perfect form.

Celia, the other major persona, embraces and even melts into the exterior world, a Romantic merging with the world outside the self as a means of escaping self. Her rejection of ego in favor of communion with the beautiful in natural and artistic form implies a critique of industrialized life and its commodity driven identity formation.²⁸ One of her defining desires is

²⁸ cf. Jameson: "Postmodernism is what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good. It is a more fully human world than the older one, but one in which 'culture' has become a veritable 'second nature'" (ix).

to escape the insularity of a human perspective. Take the second half of “Celia’s Response to the Census Agent” for example:

At first it was simple. I ate my dreams and then saw them projected against my eyelids, a rubbing like the sound of bee’s wings. I believed in the sound, and then I believed too much, and, no longer willing to eat the dreams that make the noise that is me, the hives honeycombing my head empty of chanting wings; I vanish in the crowd, hungry for the sound of flight.

Despite, or maybe as a result of, her engagement with the physical world, Celia’s inner life manifests itself in reality. Her world and her identity change in relation to how she feels, and those feelings are projected directly onto reality, with the fetishizing of sound in her voice emphasizing a materiality of language.

My poems often foreground language *qua* language to challenge my own assumptions concerning the solidity of the correspondence between an object and the self and the signs used to bring self and object into a relation in the world. “à la Carte” fetishizes sound in a critique of Cartesian logic and language use:

think therefore I
cook nonsense
old sense, rhythms
men to frogs
or swine

It begins with a refutation of the charge that poetry’s “nonsense” “rhythms” people into animals, and that its imaginative function damages reason.²⁹ The second stanza equates reason with violence and refuses the ethics of such an exchange:

trough of blood

²⁹ cf. Plato, *The Republic* (III.1)

answers nothing
to nothing, taste
for pain, schaden-
freude, a tongue
might know which
dumpling script
to fit matter
to matter matter

The rational mind thus implicated in genocide, the speaker argues against the hegemony of *knowing*:

I know
not how
choice happens
sense, exigence-
y says nothing
whew-whew-whew
blowing cool
alphabet soup
shiny red broth

Language itself is suspect. Somehow it becomes biological, a component of blood like hemoglobin, so that culture (and this includes our intellectual traditions) functions within the body with the opposite effect of blood sacrifice: the gods or dead do not appear and share their knowledge, instead knowledge itself comes to be suspect in relation to historical rationalizations of violence.

Formally, this collection may seem chaotic at first (or even third) glance. It contains a diverse set of forms, and several approaches to form often cohering in a single poem. There is the organicist impulse: a pleasure in the overarching metaphor and the projective in “The Manifesto of Pablo Sheezbeen.” There’s the OUPLIAN artifice of the homophonic “Song for a Surly Nation,” and also the rule-based constraints that appear or, sometimes, disappear in other formal structures. These appear most often in “The Manifesto of Pablo Sheezbeen,” where every poem bears a trace of an artificial constraint. There are prose poems in Celia’s voice and also Pablo’s, and there are appropriations such as “don’t stare dear Pablo” where the poem is constructed of the titles I removed from the now untitled fragments scattered throughout *Pablo and Celia*. Further, those words are the only ones permitted in the whole poem, so that each stanza reorders the same set of words. The manuscript as whole participates in the formal play, mimicking a novel (without narrative transitions) in that the trajectory of the poems follows Pablo and Celia’s relationship through failed romance to difficult friendship. The outside voices relate either to their inner lives or to a meta-element such as authorship (e.g. “Self-Portrait of Poet Persona”). In the end, I wanted every element of *Pablo and Celia* to enter the play and I hope, *cher lecteur*,³⁰ that it is as much fun to read as it was to write.

³⁰ Baudelaire “Au Lecteur”: “—Hypocrite lecteur,—mon semblable,—mon frere! ” (234)

Pablo and Celia

Song for a Surly Nation

How now leathery nights? Bear
Surly, oh, aim beltwise, knock
The bland noodle. Nipple him *un poco*:

Pick a Hector, a Benjamin-man
Ho hey! Stop mincing 'bout
The bout begins

Yo! wincing talking leperman,
Yepers, noisies cheek and tame,
A slipknot: he blow robo fix ya

So pick, *hebdomadaire lecteur*,
B themed craptacular congas,
Capering wyrms.

don't stare

Celia descended shiny
she cloud
hand cool cool

water drink
her eyes
peek-a-boo

gone
my eyes
yeah, shrink of

shadows
where

à la Carte

think therefore I
cook nonsense
old sense, rhythms
men to frogs
or swine

trough of blood
answers nothing
to nothing, taste
for pain, schaden-
freude, a tongue
might know which
dumpling script
to fit matter
to matter matter

I know
not how
choice happens
sense, exigence-
y says nothing
whew-whew-whew
blowing cool

alphabet soup

shiny red broth

Celia's Response to the Census Agent

I've always known my body was composed of the ringing of a bell tower. I don't know which tower, only that the rings spread outward so far from their vantage that I grew legs and a mouth to feed by devouring dreams in reverse.

At first it was simple. I ate my dreams and then saw them projected against my eyelids, a rubbing like the sound of bee's wings. I believed in the sound, and then I believed too much, and no longer willing to eat the dreams that make the noise that is me, the hives honeycombing my head empty of chanting wings; I vanish in the crowd, hungry for the sound of flight.

Child's Play

The first dream I don't remember
lost to the shuffle of days.

#33 is a circus of rose bushes.

#42 walks backwards on its hands.

#13 mistakes sparrows for breadcrumbs.

#7 stacks rocks into constellations.

Dream #47 wriggles juniper from concrete.

#35 so badly I see
the head a jackal, maybe
myself in the puddle

Dream #17 is a crowd on its knees
bowing in unison. #8, pigeon wings
flapping toward me

#41 is lips, pressure of teeth

#3, a gargoyle gargling rain

#18 is a feast where guests roll horses into cigars

#25, the mating call of a motorcycle

A statue knocks hello in #42

Dream #6 is a ballet
a battle, children swinging branches

#28 bobs,
waves and wings, a broken ship
hooked on coral

#30 is the sound of crows cursing
an earthworm standing its ground

Dream #14 is the moon blushing

at V of geese

#2 is a beggar rattling his cup
of crickets

#52, nothing but wind
cutting teeth against stone walls

Pablo on Pablo

Hero of my own stories
I'd like to be recognized
for my genitives

but I'm chasing weasels again
yes, in circles
a 3-ring circus
where I am
in each ring
pelted by popcorn

scratched through a box of matches
for a little more cheer

one choice after another
repeated flare
charred sticks
sulfurous air

Wind wakes buds on tree's fingers
tickles dandelion fluff from grass
arms outstretched, honey shining my palms
I try to wriggle into its grip
and wait for the lift-off

Weasels

sport brown fur
a layer sheds
dirt and water

teeth never stop
growing they
gnaw

Celia's Recurring Nightmare

What did I expect to find at the center
of my own bestial mind but another

labyrinth raised in my own image,
sinew and bone and torso,

a muscular chest spattered with the red
drooling from the hole between horns,

a bull's flat fangs, my brown eyes,
hunting myself among stone walls

under the eaves of a book
under a pile of bones chattering

Here! She's here!

There's no escaping the purr of

the animal that carries me in its teeth.

We All Scream for Ice Cream

The body
politic has wrists, doctor connect dot to
dot to dot

recruiter's
pen scratch bloody dash, we've agreed
not to free

absent voice
of me too long hiding, nothing compares
to hyah!

tossing hand
from saddle, hat in dirt, reins catching
cactus spines

shuddering
S. O. S., everybody points a-
way, coughing

three dots of
which you are one, I am two, the ten gallon hat three and
three and three

what signals
other, dot dot dot, look for me
unfinished

I'm kneeling
in street, body extended, cap in hand
a low line

what I want
for today, three dashes, coffee, a few words
from my love

days repeat
three dots, row of smashed statues
rust curtain

Celia in the Street

When I find a cobble missing from the street, I nestle into the gap. It's snug but comforting to be a stone among stones. Squeezing into the square hole takes some doing, but it's rewarding, as long as no one's around to gawk. Here I finally feel peace below the soles of passersby who ignore my pigtails giggling in the breeze. Dogs are another story, for a dog will spot you instantly and turn nose for tail. Impossible to escape in time. Better to find a bare branch and hang from your arms, a leaf in wind.

silk scarf

please tease

sibilant veil

honey-

suckle

liaison et elision

rinse and repeat

rer-rer-rer-rer

crank

Celia Plants a Tree

I don't care if eternity is sunset masquerades
or nothing: a body with its clumsy back

and awkward knees, aching as autumn
blazes to frost, thaws and wind and sudden

thunder, breathless summer. Already
the crickets begin to burrow

and the leaves of my body
tremble, barest rustle.

A Man Is a Man Is a Man

a man in the street drinking beer
is drinking beer drinking beer
nothing else in the street
but the shine of passersby
the shining of a few coins

*

a man waiting for the bus in rain
is waiting for the bus, covering his head
tapping his watch his shoe against
his shoe

*

a man sleeping in a doorway is sleeping
in a doorway dreaming we know by the way
his toes curl and uncurl, the twitch at the knee
the dancing tarp he clutches
to his chest

*

a man sitting at table is sitting at dinner
twirling a glass of wine holding it to his nose
smelling someone else's terroir
someone else's terror

*

a man riding the subway is riding the subway
holding the rail going to work
on his way

*

a man riding the subway is riding the subway
seated in a corner covering his face
riding the subway

*

a man jogging in the park is jogging in the park

wearing light shorts and headband, headphones
tied the arm, following a path
in a circle he follows again

Have you followed the path printed clover and hoof, a rat
scattering for cover, this woof and whorl winding
through trees strung with hives, the buzzing river
bumbling over slip-rock, fallen branch moss-slick
Oh, wet feet! For sun's honey-treat, the beat beat
thumping dust, what musk for airy reason!

Celia at Happy Hour

Some nights after work I practice placing myself into a bottle. It isn't easy to imagine oneself so small. Although I've tried for years, I haven't mastered the technique of visualizing my feet as they slide through the narrow mouth. Somehow the toes are always too big. So, once more, I grasp myself by the scruff, lift my now limp body out of place and gently, very gently, guide my legs toward the opening.

What then? my breath, the smooth, fogged walls.

The Weasels Write Home

Don't be fooled, of all beasts
Homo sapiens invented manners.

A city takes many teeth, they polish
theirs sharp.

It forges the environment around itself,
see the recliner stamped in its image?

Even resting in its den before the box
cataloging the ways it dies, it is unpredictable.

For example, this population makes up 5% of the species,
it buries 27% of edible food in a pit to rot.

By giving or taking portraits of the dead the living
are bent against their will.

Sometimes the pictures fail, there are also cages
of words and steel and concrete.

3.2% of this population live in one of these,
the others make their own of paper.

I've got my words
cleaned and oiled and
loaded with letters

and Celia's got her eye fixed
on the other side--our favorite
O

and inside's more than letters
words, phrases--her favorite's
an eye peeled

mine's on the tip o'
no, wait, I mean
reach for the sky

Celia's Still Life

Statues more alive than a dozen children wiggling to be so still. Feeling whatever they felt however long it took to unfix a stare. To live like that! Somehow I knew, it's all in the lips. Struck my pose, hand stretched out. Before I could settle into the right expression, the teacher palmed my hand, drew me back into the squirming circle.

It takes two hands. The sting of cardinal's
red. This morning. In the underbrush.
Something painful about waking. Fuzzy
mesh of false dawn. Imprecise. Bodies
soft in blankets. I'm a dick. If a cigarette
could speak. Our touch smokes. I know.
Sometimes it burns. I know.

Celia's Lullaby

Have you woke the wee hours
unable to escape dreaming's
net, unable to return
unwilling to rise
and pace the floor's familiar track
around couch and chair
have you stared
at the ceiling's shadows
reached for the phone
knowing it didn't ring?

The moon is leaning hard.

Go on,
argue with wind
Shh. . .

Weasel Beware
the fool moon, the laughing letter
cardboard box armor
christmas paper cape

stupid to pretend
it's not coming

Leaf-fall

someone's running. screeching tram.
in this city of spires clouds risk terrible wounds. sometimes
pierced. not so different. that moment in air. stretching for
something gleaming.

a child chasing pigeons. for all
the parks and plazas. days I've paced these paths. pretending
it new. more patience. children say there's a way
back.

the statue staring. square barricade
of buildings. it is still the city of fairytales. so what
do you make of past's marble poise? patina's sense
of circumstance. the trees
laughing.

burying bench. what accumulates.
the sky falling around your ears. the
mist is not your mist. for once. what
I remember. moon and stars. mostly streetlamps. a few
windows.

Flying Monkeys and There Are Flying Monkeys

It's no shame to fear the locust shell
the tilt of a jaunty tricorne

the moon jangling on its chain.
Every Saturday someone dies for want of thistles.

It is given, what crumbles, crumbles.
When again I touch the softness of a bell

knot a simple chord around my neck.

Celia on Celia

For this I steal
your tongue

a clipped task
this nip

from my own flask
I's no less

sun, flowers
synergy

of tossed hair
bumbling bee

don't stare dear Pablo Celia descended shiny dream #8,176 reach for the sky
seize the day a silver bullet peek a boo

dear Pablo don't stare Celia descended a silver bullet sky shiny reach seize the peek a
day boo

dear Pablo

dream #8,176 seize the day a silver bullet Celia descended shiny peek a boo dear don't stare

Pablo don't stare a shiny bullet Celia the day descended dream #8,176 seize the shiny don't dear
sky

Celia a silver peek a descended shiny day the bullet dream #8,176 seize the sky stare reach don't

Dear Pablo

To touch gossamer
a shimmer

To make it yours

butterfly wing
on your finger

C

Self-Portrait of the Artist-Persona

sewing suits of fallen leaves, parades crotchless
for the wind of your stares

wearing plastic moustache and fluorescent green fez,
is stuck at beginning the sentence, a monkey
dancing for peanuts behind velvet curtain

playing solitaire with 52 fools, puts on latex gloves
to touch the self

following treasure maps on the back of cereal boxes
graffitis X X X on the mayor's door

preferring the beggar's blessing to laurels, prays to thorns
to wilt roses

beginning by sentence, sings
happy birthday at funerals

folding foil hats for pigeons, reads the paper
with plastic decoder ring

struck by beginning sentence, worships the atomic bomb
in whitey-tighties

one finger in salute, wants to trade
a box of chocolate jesuses to France
for two bottles red wine

Pablo's Postcard to Celia

If I were to forget the donkey's bare ribs, coat muddy and worn nude by harness, chains chiming, the thud of the stick. . . If I were to forget the driver's nose, rotting like some exotic fruit, pit dangling by who knows what fibrous thread, the brow stark as the donkey's ribs and burnt just as dark, his hands like broken twigs, indistinguishable from the stick with which he tolls the bell of the donkey's back a slow and even beat, the dirt street jarring flat bicycle tires, how cart and man and nose jostle as if shaken in a giant maw, the wheels pushing rocks, the cat dragging broken spine to ditch, the sound it makes, everyone staring past

Celia to Pablo

Recognition isn't a beginning, Pablo. Sometimes, I deceive myself. I say I am tall and bronze. I can catch bullets. It's been 300 days since I left. One for each soldier in that story you love. At least you taught me to count.

Pant Leg and Clothes Pins

a bus dives through
sun in bare trees

academic bricks
trickle morning rain

Knoxville heavy with cloud
then flash

August sun, bus
through barricade

of buildings, my shadow strikes
long now, faceless self

the rock-n-roll
diplomacy of car bombs

beat down
nobody counts anymore

these men, for example
at burning bus stop

paper bags in hand
they shimmer

count to a hundred
hands over eyes
and feel the flickering breath
a face
blurred as if
by panty-hose, the barrel
of a nose
right between the eyes

The Death of Pablo Sheezbeen

My last morning I wake and dress in scrubs and operating mask. A veiled woman waits with pen and paper. She is a plume of smoke. She stones me with curses that jostle me forward. Empty handed and barefoot I step into the ring. My opponent has no face. No, he has my face. He bares his chest and writhing is a nation in my belly.

When he steps in, old man, to wrap his arms around me, he cradles my head.

The Manifesto of Pablo Sheezbeen

1

[Tom and Jerry do the tango]

You'll probably say
I got weasels in duh head.
Texas Hold'em.
One's hedge-brows

glares a fence of cards.
Dealer fondling two hearts.
Last and smallest weasel
counts cards to name god.

Bank-bag lounging, their
banter doesn't stop,
not for smoky cigars,
not for "ought."

[the problem with everything]

My face hovers
over restless shapes

a line of jaws

speaking teeth

Go on, they say

pick a word, a side

whether fuck or

fight

everything dies, *click*

[kissing babies in the spotlight]

We must learn to be impassive.
Impossible. We mean infallible.

Moonrise at sea.

Composed empty gestures.
Never offending never startling.

Unmoving Q.

[*avast ye mateys*]

No wonder I wake, cutlass
for tongue, jolly roger
whipping brain.

Nothing's to do
board merchant cutter and
cut a piece to fit

my anger, its
pattern, cuirass
memory, present
 Lookout cawing
 Ship ho!

[*Shoo Shoo*]

flip the

channel make it

nothing but view

slot canyons and hairless peaks

tattooed slogans marked TM

billboards blocking good shot

bare navel

the valley I mean

hazards thinking or acting

shrieking siren's call

bomb shelter skull

X

[Captain Incognito and the deadly word]

shadows of bones
in pocket

the lance a word
piercing skull
masked in name

a word, if you please

[*vaya con dios*]

caliche and dust
sotol and yucca
dry scrub grass

a still pool
helmet and beard reflected
night's hidden X

one step to the next
following sun
one day to the next
caliche and dust

moss and water
sotol and yucca

shadow of rock
hunting weasel painted

upright
arms broad swept
seven gleaming cities

[*exclusive!*]

I mean every word a lie coded against assimilation subjective me more
interesting this way W M D perfume haunting reruns ~~*nature de rerum*~~
~~*boomboomboom*~~ fingering the bomb no ecstasy like forbidden hole

[*good morning Joe*]

Think I'm ignorant?
Got a head full of weasels so toothless
can't chew their own fat
without your bleached teeth?

That I *long*
some Romantic patsy

for a reading of petals:

Loves me
Loves me not? . . .

no fucking shepherd. . .

But nymphs, oo, nice like
a loose letter, *omnipotens*
U –

betcha have a word for this, too,
huh, smarty pants?

[*All my weasels*]

are your weasels
or related to your weasels.

They die and come back,
teeth filed for vengeance.

A mask a name I
until until

a palm reaches out
satin glove.

[confessions of a caged monkey]

which smile kisses the grace
in the curves of a silken S

which the opening salvo
the headlong charge, spitting curses
for the camera in each plastic tree

you wouldn't watch if I were innocent

A

[*a last primer*]

- A alpha means trouble
- B an old truck and a dirt road
- C isn't a bird, but you already knew that
- D an eternal curse
- E doesn't matter no matter what they say
- F the way it hangs like meat on a hook
- G there's no such thing
- H silent till it wants to scare you
- I won't play anymore

[*earth people*]

if you're watching this, you know what we did
how chatter hunts your dens and warrens

rough letter
of its breath

Ha

[*rebel, inc.*]

Failing the firm scratch,
the sulfurous line

igniting globe,
planetary match,

what's to lose?

Opposition's sexy
and the Swiss'll
guard your cash
sowhaddayasay,

Ruler of Ash?

[*a gala event*]

maybe that's the way
three quick blows
to mark wall *P*

then gone, a taunting letter
scent lingering
under the noses of soldiers

stumbling to halt
before the line of ladies
curtsying their gentlemen

oh to be an empty gesture
the foiled search
dashing bow

+

[*chez moi*]

A plate of words
I make unmade
snake teething its tail
don't talk full mouth

[*chasing butterflies*]

Whatcha wanna hear? Happy
birds singing happy?
Blue? the front
line creased

you and I Please
don't Time's
catching

[*apple-picking*]

Suppose I wanted escape
tongue-sharpening weasels?

Alas, how to climb Rapunzel's
braided straw?

My snickering tongue,
the terrible fall.

[*about a weasel*]

Might be imagination, I hear it plays sly tricks, a frequency told never
admit that

Words make reel, paint blush on shadows in pocket—

What I sense—cinnamon musk, a particular laughter, candlelight, may I
say *et cetera*?—

What surrounds you, not letters on paper, whispering displeasure,
your cheek

[from the friends of P.S., A public service announcement]

Make your demand
something forbidden
contested, an interstice
like a rib
a letter
something between the lines

[*counting down*]

10. A Dr.'s rubber mallet

9. The sudden kick of J

8. Certainty of it

7. Impulse Escape How

6. Letters a broken

5. City of

4. Thoughts

3. Buttons

2. Buttons

1. Buttons

[hand, then breath]

First the foundation, then the supports

A particular weasel window shopping

Its shape, in glass

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Appendix:

Early Experiments

The palimpsest in my head moving among dust devils like my father
 The shapes of pecan trees persistent as wind house trees shuddering fields wind
 within where desert bends away, dark line in sand patterns/of thought .my
 own molded dust Peacocks in a chain-link box The palimpsest in my head
 The **PALIMPSEST** in my head The shapes of pecan trees patterns/of thought
 The wind within the crumpled aluminum sky violet lines of rain clouds speak
 Cacti patient for rain, for the burst of flowers flat distance of sand and scrub brush
 A ridge of caves, head high a ridge of caves, head high patterns/of thought
 The palimpsest in my head mouthing shapes to shapeless wind The shapes of pecan trees
 Ing drizzle uncertain of goodwill patterns OF thought flat distance of sand
 and scrub brush a ridge of caves, head high where desert bends away, dark line in sand
 dark line in sand flat distance of sand and scrub brush
 The palimpsest in my head skyscrapers grasping far horizon
 Peacocks in a chain-link box faint-blue between rock and sun **ECHOES**
ECHOES patterns/of thought
 skyscrapers grasping far horizon
 where desert bends away, dark line in sand
 flat distance of sand and scrub brush
 violet lines of rain clouds speak
 patterns/of thought
 stut t er

Beginning

It has no shape or color that is stable, as if I had fallen asleep and a long
train coiled through my bowels devouring dreams in reverse, pixels without
meaning, like poetry
a certain gesture of confusion or indecision—a way of being
just skin with thousands of nerve endings beginning with contact—
What more could I want but to breathe this lilac, no, jasmine, no, this humid air
where I live without knowing what it means to find your hair
between my fingers

Preemptive

Late and worn, can't sleep, shadows in the dark
threats vague as childhood's toothy bugbears,
old enough to know these grasping arcs
no more than light's opposite—the wares

of imagination, wrought by caffeine,
too much tv-news and days so long
night lacks sufficient pity to wean
thought from such mean goings-on,

clock counting toward alert, number
after glaring number, minutes pass
hearses in procession, where's slumber
and the escape of dreams trudging en masse

toward morning's country, rising sun
pushing through windows, a boy with a gun.

Immaculate

My father walked out on us at lunch. I'd been studying Freud's writings on dream interpretation and mom wanted a demonstration. It's stupid, I know, but I told her that her dream meant she subconsciously wanted to have rough sex with her boss in front of an audience. Dad dropped a handful of bills and stomped off.

I walked in
on her once
topless

I keep trying to forget
how time shapes
the body

Seems like she spends most days sweeping
Cat hair and cobwebs from under furniture,
Pausing only to answer the phone or fight protesting lungs.
Dad says Houston is killing her.

One bra
Two bra
Red bra
Black bra

Worn out white bra

After my first year away from home I moved back for the summer, took to drinking beer on the lawn with old friends, stayed up past when I thought my parents should be solidly dreaming so my stumbling wouldn't wake them, force questions I couldn't answer even without a tongue like wadded gauze.

One night I came in early and went to brush my teeth. The basin shared a wall with their bed stand—I heard them.

Ahem:

There once was a man from Purgatroid,
Had a memory he couldn't avoid,
Saw his momma's nipples
(Talk about psychic ripples!)
And now they call him Poppa Freud.

I was supposed to say how she protected us.
Dad's hypoglycemic rages shouting the world in two
Between good and evil, and I wonder how she fared having breasts
Which had to be evil—source of so much temptation and

Yes I shared the myth of immaculate parents
Those who never knew pleasure beyond what was necessary
To make us—two boys and a girl. I grew up believing

My body an evil to overcome—manifestations of morning wood
And those strange adolescent dreams staining underpants proof
That *In Adam's fall / We sinned all*, that I could not escape
Having fed from her body, from the source of Adam's curse—
I wonder whether she feels cursed, living with men.

Letters

For Berryman

Ah, Mr. Bones, I'm lonely tired like you.
Now your letter, numbered years torn from the wall
since the last. What should I say? From you
it's nice to hear yourself rallying
against the fatal ten shot lineup
you thought you'd licked

the last time I got stamped words
on paper from you. Sometimes I'm not sure
anyone really matters—I shouldn't say this
now having not hear you so long—it sounds like
adieu, or the footsteps,
last bottle drunk, out the door, fading. How is

Henry? Still, in the dark hours
when dreams do not come,
do unthought of memories
of that oilfield we called "town"
in circles chase him
chasing his tail?

Gusts

Those days without enough to distract mind
I'd watch weather
roll off Sandias—
 wind's
 insistent push—
how cloud enters valley

*

Every motion, shape carved in time—
wind unraveling cloud,
biting breath of winter blue sky

*

First year of divorce
I swallowed myself
in wine, red as heart
in air; tried not to breath,
especially in public, afraid
I'd exhale the cloud filling lungs—
emotion I could name only my own

*

When we first met
we whispered,
brush of fingertips,
not darker, nasal vowels,
lilted rhythms of a French tongue,
French ear—
caress of long brown hair.

*

Moonlit whispers,
curled lovers
unable to remain
perfectly still—

Perfectly still.
unable to remain
curled lovers,
moonlit whisper.

*

Once you said my heart's
a small bird
in your hands

*

Wind harasses moonlight
an opening
a closing

Gusts
taking/bringing
glow

*

I cursed you—
wished you unspeakable
sadness—

How I cursed you!

*

Sometimes in the second year I forgot the touch of your hand, or remembered in the arms of another I wanted but couldn't hold longer than a weekend, a week, maybe, before silence descended about my lips only your name could enter.

*

Serrated edge of mountain
shearing tufts of cloud,
veil over mouth of valley—

blush of western clouds

*

It's always loss myth we made, robin cold, on pillow— alone, beside the head so serene even after feathers and the stench— you get used to it.	we remember, corpse of small bird in bright pajamas still we wake serene and because it is we wait its waking clutter sheets <i>oh, the stench—</i>
--	--

*

I don't remember the timbre of your eyes,
isn't that strange?

Your tongue I'll never forget
Mon amour -- chou chou--

my little cabbage--okay, that's
not funny anymore

*

Putain ces francaises

ces 'ricains

I had to bring your tongue into this.

*

Early morning, woke
to wind off peaks,
screams in door jam,
moon
 through angry trees

*

Sometimes a breath on wind—
 Chanel Number Five—

See? . . . I remember
 more than I like

*

By the third year I forgot
what I forgot. In a bar on Central
to escape wind's barrage of plastic bags,
newsprint, I remember forgetting
the taste of ears. . . . tequila?

*

Wind scratches window
 with tree

same rhythm all day
 almost, almost, almost

Sense

Use the breeze. Foresee gladness seizing accident (use
the breeze) and mock. Foresee codas waking what I am
out of the strangeness of bard's jest. From yesterday's many

nagging walls, a temple like a callous.
But it slows now this southerly sense. A terrace
of possibilities: outdoors ten nights.

At the Hour of Love and Blue Eye Lids

I

It was a lavender blouse
Hiding nothing in the deep blue
Betwixt damnation and impassioned clay.

All look and likeness caught from earth
Only because behind it the sky is a doubtful, a doubting
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue.

(We are as clouds that veil the midnight moon.)

When the mind's wings o'erspread
That pale, serrated indigo on the sea line,
Your white face turned away;

I weep; and walk endless ways of thought
Through the narrow doorway into the sunlight
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope.

The last memory I have,
Of aught on that illumined face,
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought.

But the south wind blows the sky clear at times
And, oiled and scented, urges you on
To feel in sad amazement then
The fool's gold of the sun.

II

Our face like a crumpled sheet
Then the space where the face has gone and the gaze remains
Where nothing can erase it,
The screaming face it was before it cracked,

Poised, unanswerable. If it is without
Measuring the full cadence of bare
Cobble of milky way
That leaves bright flesh like sand and turns it chill,

Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die.
And open to the bright and liquid sky,
Moon of a hundred equal faces
Where the ordinary hornets in a human's heart

Reveal the crimson flower flash
Tumbling like a waterfall of China silk,
Autumn and silk and nothingness. . .
Give me a thousand kisses. Then a hundred. . .

But I know better. When desolation comes,
Clouds take any shape they fancy.
But whose is this vapid face
Where the illusion of hope means skin torn from boxes?

III

It was not dark at first. that opening onto the red sea humming
The white ink of clouds,
Each with the scalped face of the other,
The white cobwebs and the dust on the eyelashes.

Above the end of the sky of my dreams
The light moves slowly past morning to afternoon
While even the wish to be
Melting snow, forest, rushes, river and boats
Returns, on unshod pale and coughing horses, descending the ladder of

Red birds new grass a yellow chair—
Heart of the ice-light emptiness, live, intense—
The poem of the mind in the act of finding
A clear curve of stone, mottled by stars
Swathed in exotic finery, in loose silks.

And when darkness folds this day
Empty, so that, before the other Empty, a
Ringing like the voices of birds, in very grave distress,

All the resources the tongue braids
Are unclenched. It is night. Songs have blossomed
With a thread of moonlight.

IV

For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
Like the bird bones on the beach
The salt of the bay had worked on for a season.
Empty perfection, as I take you in
Under the incalculable sky, listless, diseased with stars
(and the wind whipped my throat),

Something startles me where I thought I was safest:
Perhaps half out of some speechless hope,
He battles heart and arm, his own blue sky
Of my skull of sky and earth
Already half a spirit, mumbling and muttering sadly
From the tangled web of thought and sinew.

In my heart, a scatter like milkweed.
Later thousands of dreams
Loosen the cord of years:
Long live the weeds that overwhelm
The green sky from which rain was falling;
And beyond it the deep blue air, that shows,

Through deserts of erotic flowers,
The carmine printed mouth.

V

Nothing has remained for me except language:
The fire red forehead—unconsumed by
The lips of those whose lips
Broke into a cataract
Then faded, and to follow them I burn'd
An urnful of ashes. Divine Poet! Did the pyre's flames
Quiet the barking distances?

Now that the moon, who remembers and only cares
That we arrive here improvised,
Is almost down, an answering gold
That leaped through the dark,
Observe the swelling turf, and say:
*You still could lose your heart
In the dark blue kiss,*

*And the turning disk preserves, longer even,
The trace of a bird in snow (as always
Knowing in you, that we do not exist)—
Enough! Enough! It is enough for me,
The frail duration of a flower:
Come hither in your shining purple gown.*

Notes to Poems

Song for a Surly Nation

This poem is a loose homophonic based on Pushkin's "The Bronze Horseman."

Beginning

The first line was lifted from Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge's "Fog" from *Empathy*.

Immaculate

"In Adam's fall / We sinned all" is lifted from *The New England Primer* by John Cotton and Westminster.

Letters

An imitation of John Berryman's *Dream Songs*.

Sense

A homophonic based on the first stanza Marcin Jagodziński's "A Poem for Marta Podgórnik," which was provided by the editors of *Circumference*.

At the Hour of Love and Blue Eye Lids

The title is from André Breton's "Vigilance," Darren Jackson, trans. (unpublished).

Section I

1. Yoshimasu Gōzō. "Osiris, The God of Stone." Hiroaki Sato, trans.
2. Arkadii Dragomoschenko. "A Sentimental Elegy." Lyn Hejinian and Elena Balashova, trans.
3. John Keats. "Written Before Re-Reading King Lear"
4. S.T. Coleridge. "Phantom."
5. Denise Levertov. "The Jacob's Ladder."
6. S.T. Coleridge. "Dejection: An Ode."
7. P.B. Shelley. "Mutability."
8. Fitz-Greene Halleck. "On the Death of Joseph Rodman Drake."
9. Derek Walcott. "The Fortunate Traveller."

10. Euripides. *Medea*. Paul Roche, trans.
11. Sophocles. *King Oedipus*. E.F. Watling, trans.
12. David Wagoner. "A Young Girl with a Pitcher Full of Water."
13. Robert Browning. "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came."
14. Galway Kinnell. "Flower Herding on Mount Monadnock."
15. S.T. Coleridge. "Phantom."
16. William Shakespeare. *Hamlet*.
17. Horace. *Odes*. Stanley Lombardo, trans.
18. Ibid.
19. Eugenio Montale. "Ossi di Seppia." Harry Thomas, trans.
20. Wisława Szymborska. "Travel Elegy." Stanisław Barańczak and Clare Cavangh, trans.

Section II

1. Vladimir Mayakovsky. "The Cloud in Trousers." Max Hayward and George Reavey, trans.
2. Jorie Graham. "Event Horizon."
3. Eugenio Montale. "Dora Markus." Maurice English, trans.
4. Richard Hugo. "The Way a Ghost Dissolves."
5. Geoffrey Hill. *Funeral Music*.
6. Michael Anania. *The River Songs of Arion*.
7. Gary Snyder. "Ri-rap."
8. Derek Walcott. "Frederiksted, Dusk."
9. Thomas Hardy. "Hap."
10. P.B. Shelley. *Prometheus Unbound*.
11. Federico Garcia Lorca. "The Moon Rising." Lysander Kemp, trans.
12. James Tate. "The Wheelchair Butterfly."
13. Craig Raine. "The Onion, Memory."
14. Ai. "Salome."
15. Paul Celan. "Go blind today already." Pierre Joris, trans.
16. Catullus. "5." Jane Wilson Joyce, trans.
17. Roberta Hill Whiteman. "In the Longhouse, Oneida Museum."
18. Aristophanes. *Clouds*. Jeffrey Henderson, trans.
19. Margaret Atwood. "Daguerrotype Taken in Old Age."
20. Dave Smith. "The Roundhouse Voices."

Section III

1. Kamau Brathwaite. "Stone."
2. Michel Deguy. "O Great Apposition of the World." Clayton Eshleman, trans.
3. Ibid. "To Forget the Image." C. Eshleman, trans.
4. Amelia Rosselli. *Martial Variations*. Lawrence R. Smith, trans.
5. Shiraishi Kazuko. "The Man Root." Kenneth Rexroth and Ikuko Atsumi, trans.
6. Tamura Ryūichi. "My Imperialism." Christopher Drake, trans.
7. Amelia Rosselli. "Dialogue with the Dead." Lawrence R. Smith, trans.

8. Paavo Haavikko. "The First Poem." Anselm Hollo, trans.
9. Ece Ayhan. "Geranium and the Child." Murat Nemet-Nejat, trans.
10. Robert Kelly. "The Man Who Loved White Chocolate."
11. Inger Christensen. *Alphabet*. Pierre Joris, trans.
12. Wallace Stevens. "Of Modern Poetry."
13. James Wright. "Sappho."
14. Anthony Hecht. "The Deodand."
15. Badr Shakir al-Sayyab. "The River and Death." Pierre Joris and Hédi Jaouad, trans.
16. Henri Michaux. *Portrait des Meidosems*. Darren Jackson, trans. (unpublished).
17. Göran Sonnevi. "A Child Is Not a Knife." Rika Lesser, trans.
18. Nicole Brossard. "The Temptation." Barbara Godard, trans.
19. Ted Berrigan. "XXXVII."
20. Shu Ting. "The Mirror." Fang Dai, Dennis Ding, and Edward Morin, trans.

Section IV

1. W.H. Auden. "In Memory of W.B. Yeats."
2. Robert Hass. "Regalia for a Black Hat Dancer."
3. Ibid.
4. James Merrill. "Coda: The Higher Keys."
5. Robert Duncan. "Passage over Water."
6. A.R. Ammons. "So I Said I Am Ezra."
7. Walt Whitman. "This Compost."
8. Rainer Maria Rilke. *Duino Elegies: The Second Elegy*. A. Poulin, Jr., trans.
9. Fitz-Greene Halleck. "The Field of the Grounded Arms."
10. Samuel Beckett. "Echo's Bones."
11. Donald Justice. "In Memory of the Unknown Poet, Robert Boardman Vaughn."
12. Hafiz. "Love Is the Funeral Pyre." Daniel Ladinsky, trans.
13. Maxine Kumin. "How It Is."
14. Kenneth Koch. "To Marina."
15. Lu Yu. "Phoenix Hairpins." Kenneth Rexroth, trans.
16. Theodore Roethke. "Long Live the Weeds." (line partially taken from Hopkins's "Inversnaid.")
17. W.S. Merwin. "Hearing."
18. Philip Larkin. "High Windows."
19. Robert Hayden. "Double Feature."
20. Karl Shapiro. "The Dome of Sunday."

Section V

1. Muhammed al-Maghut. "Executioner of Flowers." May Jayyusi and Naomi Shihab Nye, trans.
2. Paul Celan. "Harbor." Pierre Joris, trans.
3. Carolyn Forché. "The Memory of Elena."
4. Chinua Achebe. "We Laughed at Him."

5. John Keats. "Ode on Indolence."
6. Ovid. *Amores*. Diane Aronson Svarlien, trans.
7. Vasko Popa. "Burning Shewolf." Charles Simic, trans.
8. D.H. Lawrence. "The Argonauts."
9. Wisława Szymborska.. "Nothing Twice." Stanisław Barańczak and Clare Cavanaugh, trans.
10. Denise Levertov. "Ceremonies."
11. Morton Marcus. "Tongue."
12. Philip Freneau. "The Indian Burying Ground."
13. Osip Mandelstam. "The Charlie Chaplin Poem." Barbara Einzig and Jerome Rothenberg, trans.
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16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. John Keats. "Lines to Fanny."
19. Philip Freneau. "The Wild Honey Suckle."
20. "Garland of Sulpicia." Rachel Hadas, trans.

Vita

Darren Jackson's poems and translations have appeared or are forthcoming in *Circumference*, *The Pinch*, *Smartish Pace*, *Iron Horse*, *Cimarron Review*, and other journals. He has translated *Life in the Folds* by Henri Michaux, *A Free Air* by Albane Gellé, and "The White Globe," an essay by Bertrand Westphal, which is forthcoming from Northwestern University Press in the *The Planetary Turn: Art, Dialogue, and Geoaesthetics in the 21st-Century*. He also collaborated with Marilyn Kallet and J. Bradford Anderson on the translation of Chantal Bizzini's *Disaffected*. He has been a Virginia Center for the Creative Arts Fellow in France and Virginia.