

The Wet Motorcycle

The
Wet
Motorcycle
a selected

Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino

*If you're looking for a different word order
read Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino.*

—Alan Halsey

E·RATIO

The Wet Motorcycle

In this selection of writing drawn from 30+ generative years, Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino, through poetry, essay, and story, inscribes a psycho/physiological map of his linguistic odyssey. Employing fragments, neologisms, fused phonemic spinal disks, juxtapositions and disjunctions, human and syntactic sy(e)nergies, and incisive critical argument/s, St. Thomasino unleashes the power/s of language/s—his intensive lifelong project. Trigger warning: make sure you have the surge protectors in your synapses turned on.

—Crag Hill

In *Culture and Value*, Ludwig Wittgenstein argues that poetic meaning is architectural and “makes one want to respond with a gesture.” Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino’s *The Wet Motorcycle* illustrates this reciprocal nature of reading. As he states in “Crash Course in Logoclastics,” the “discourse is not anterior to the reading,” but a “putting-in-order” enacted by the reader at the site of the poem. This complex binary of readerly invitation and agency is beautifully explored in the collection’s title poem, which functions simultaneously as “fortune, or pasture,” and as “a summons / or // roster.” Here, the reader is both participant and the recipient of this “landscape of one’s own.” One reads these poems, in other words, for their considerable intelligence, for their aesthetic pleasures, but also for their promises of these shared cathedrals of ongoing space, gesture and mind.

—Jonathan Minton

These are poems which happily don’t try to explain themselves: they only invite us to enjoy the flight. Beware vertigo and be prepared for macaronics squeezed out of lyric stripped to artery and vein. Some words ask mercy and reference runs to an allusive and elusive lexicon for cover. There’s no slack but much crafty elision and many well-timed jumps. If you’re looking for a different word order read Gregory Vincent St Thomasino.

—Alan Halsey

The Wet Motorcycle

“Image and language take precedence” above all else, says Walter Benjamin. In these poems by Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino, we are reminded that we need not choose between the two. Here, where every poem echoes another unto infinity, we are reminded of the “solitary arc” that is the intersection of text and image, the geometry of the world become word, “an epitome, in parenthesis / a passage, or, in correspondence.” These poems entangle and disentangle. Read horizontally or vertically, forward or backward, we make, “out of” the unhomely—that is, language—“a home.” To read these poems is to create heterotopic spaces, as much in their negation and absence as their horizons. As readers, we are “now harking and immovable.” We are now “making quote.” Read these poems and embrace the plurality of the word, imagine space anew and expanding.

—Jacqueline Winter Thomas

Even in poetry—perhaps the most self-conscious of all the arts—words have a tendency to be the intermediate agents of things, leading us back into the world of red wheelbarrows or love affairs which gave rise to them in the first place. In a famous poem, “Brise Marine,” the great nineteenth-century French poet Stéphane Mallarmé discovered that the loss of “mâts” (masts) and “îlots” (isles) could be made up for not by the acquisition of other mâts and îlots but by the *word* “matelots” (sailors), which contained the combined sounds of “mâts” and “îlots.” What was put in by words can be replaced by words. It is in this tradition—language’s self-consciousness rather than its referential qualities—that Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino writes. His work frees the mind to contemplate the very fact of the words before us, their meanings, their sounds, their relationships and lack of relationships. It is a dizzying ride into one of the most fundamental aspects of human consciousness: the words we use, misuse, abuse, and make the foundation stones of any selfhood we may have. His work is simultaneously a liberation and a challenge.

—Jack Foley

The Wet Motorcycle

This work, which I have been lucky enough to see before publication, includes some absolutely pyrotechnic poems that burst off the page and whoosh over your head. An early sequence is called *Bolt*. To me they are mysterious meteors of meaning. Take “Bolt twenty,” which pinballs between tiny fragments of, perhaps, Tristan and Iseult, and Petrarch, and may be alluding to the misfortune of having to dash your brain on the harsh business of grappling with words. *The Wet Motorcycle* is also remarkable in that it provides the theoretical background to enable you to better understand the poet’s way of seeing. He offers a *Crash Course in Logoclastics*, which employs the term “logoclastics” to suggest a break or dislocation in discourse. This break is where the reader steps in to bridge the gap with “their own logic, sense and meaning.” I read this as encouraging a more engaged reading, where the reader is co-creating with the writer. The theory continues with a description of the “pannarrative” text. This description of how the writer engages with the “one great narration” to produce his work I find fascinating. Sure it is difficult. But it has rewards and challenges. This is a serious and pioneering endeavour, which has poetry, flash fiction, novels and theory in its ambit. It is unlike any other I have read, so must be explored.

—Peter Kenny

When you collapse cause and effect between [1] image and/or narrative and [2] signification, you get something like Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino’s poetry. One hears of the “I” in the writing of poems but not so much of the “I” reading them. What St. Thomasino’s poems effect then, for the reader, can be, not just the reader *reading*, but, concurrently, *tracing* an other’s response to what’s being read. A challenge. But when the reader’s receptiveness comes to fruition, it thus can be double—which is to say, more—satisfying than what’s considered a normative read. How fitting: who knows what’s normal in poetry except that it’s something to disturb? In such disturbance can be a widening in perception—and isn’t such partly what poetry is for?

—Eileen R. Tabios

The Wet Motorcycle

Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino's retrospective, *The Wet Motorcycle: selected writings*, vibrates as a tour de force excursion into the myriad ways in which language inhabits the human condition—as meaning, as signification, as energy, as fragment, as movement, as form, as syntax, as energy, as narrative, as understanding. The poems, essays, and stories contained herein breathe vitality into the very foundations of consciousness. They, in fact, renew it. I firmly believe that a thorough study of this work would lead to a holistic understanding of how language works, and why it matters. St. Thomasino presents us with an opportunity for joy, challenge, and, most of all, a means to “Stoke / Notes into / Wooden / Flutes.” *The Wet Motorcycle* is a gift for readers and wordsmiths alike.

—Travis Cebula

This book is definitely smarter than I am, and I welcome the challenge it presents to me as a reader. *The Wet Motorcycle* confronts my assumptions of what it means to read and think. What I like most is the genre-mixing, that this book shifts wildly and unapologetically among its fiction, poetry, and critical theory content. One moment I'm reading a very invested missive on concrete poetry, the next I'm walking in the wilds with Emerson, then shifting through a line of poems all speaking beyond language, only to find myself suddenly whisked away on balloon strings in a tiny, perfect flash fiction.

—Coleman Stevenson

The Wet Motorcycle

As with all important art, when one attempts to address it in conventional prose the result is abject failure. One cannot speak of it, but only indicate where it is located and encourage others to join the experience. The great gift of this selection of St. Thomasino's writing is that we step inside the kaleidoscope of his enormously intelligent, relentlessly inventive imagination. Whether in his poetry, prose, or theory, he is at turns ecstatic, revelatory, baffling, and profound. "Logoclastics = *the break in discourse.*" We move through the volume and feel our preconceptions about the written arts and reality itself dismissed as just so much useless dust. We are compelled to experience the world for the first time all over again, and again, and again . . . our perceptual capacities destroyed and renewed. The windows have been shattered. This is the fragrance of fresh light pouring in. "and everything is real and everything is illusion, my love."

—Jake Berry

Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino's writings surgically cut into circulating language so banal reading habits can be repaired. Unlike modern medical practice, which is usually about putting something into the blood to treat the sick psyche, he bleeds the supra abundant wordy flesh so the thinking soul can heal. Basing his poetry and short prose on disruptive truth and aesthetics, his Logoclastics and other commentaries deliver an incisive, learned approach to having literature rise from the moribund. The poems in this book are living proof, and they invite you into their timelessness.

—Joseph F. Keppler

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The
Wet
Motorcycle
a selected

Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino

The Wet Motorcycle

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The Wet Motorcycle

for Carol

The Wet Motorcycle

The poems “Sills” and “Labor Day” are from the volume, *The Valise* (Dead Academics Press, 2012, ISBN 13: 9780615551777). The poems “History” and “Anselm” appeared in the artist’s book *3 Poems Introduced by Joseph F. Keppler* (Seattle, 2008). “History” appeared in the language art anthology *The Dark Would* (Apple Pie Editions, 2013). “Anselm” appeared in *Stone, River, Sky: An Anthology of Georgia Poems* (Negative Capability Press, 2015). “William” appeared in the anthology *No Distance Between Us: Long Island’s Italian American Poets* with translation in Italian by Monica Barba (Local Gems Press, 2017). The prose poem, “Untitled No. 2,” appeared in *Microbe* (No. 48, 2008) with translation in French by Éric Dejaeger. “Tops” and “Tilting” appeared online at *GAMMM* with translation in Italian by Gherardo Bortolotti. “Tops” appeared online at *To Parathyro* with translation in Greek by Anna Niarakis. “Tilting” was made into a video poem by Mary Ann Sullivan and appeared online at *The Tower Journal* (Vol. 1, No. 4, 2008). (http://www.towerjournal.com/FALL_ISSUE/tilting/tilting2.html)

In the fall of 2013, the poems “History,” “Sills,” “Donation Street,” “Labor Day,” “William,” “Tops,” “Tilting,” “Attendant Docent,” “The Galloping Man,” “Anselm,” “Canteen,” “Rudiments” and “The Wet Motorcycle,” all of which began life as part of the *Theatreland* manuscript, were translated into the Georgian language and adapted for the performance art production, *Carousel: Dialogues and Structurobics*, by Margo Korableva Performance Theatre in Tbilisi, Georgia, directed by, and with translation by, David Chikhladze. In March of 2015, “Ushio Sho” was adapted for *Diva Divan*, a physical theatre collaboration between International Culture Lab, New York, and Margo Korableva Performance Theatre, Tbilisi, Georgia, as “Everything is Under Control,” conceived and directed by David Chikhladze.

The Bolt poems began life as *igne* (Runaway Spoon Press, 1993, ISBN 0-926935-88-7) and are here revised and emancipated from the typewriter. In October 2018, Bolt poems appeared in the journal, *Akhali Saunje* No. 10 (#64), translated into the Georgian and with an introduction by David Chikhladze. The “No.” poems began life as *Ekphrasis* (Pygmy Forest Press, 1994). “No. 23” appeared in the broadside *Alabama Dogshoe Moustache* 14 (dbqp: No. 190, 1994). “Elegy for Christopher Smart” first appeared online at *Great Works* #10, 2007. “Ushio Sho” first appeared online at *xStream* #9, 2003. For “Crash Course in Logoclastics” *Fell Swoop* #43, 1996, *Disturbed Guillotine* #3, 1997, and *Neologisms* #3, 1997. For “Concrete to Eidetic” *UTSANGA* #17, 2018. “Crash Course in Logoclastics,” “On Pannarrativity”

The Wet Motorcycle

and “Concrete to Eidetic” are from *The Logoclasody Manifesto* (E·ratio Editions. Second Edition, 2018).

The short novel *Linda or Lydia* first appeared online at *The Tower Journal* (Vol. 1, No. 3, 2008). *Stephen’s Lake (a novel in parts)* appeared as an e-chap and print-on-demand edition with cover art by Jukka-Pekka Kervinen (xPress(ed), 2004, ISBN 951-9198-60-1).

The poems “No. 6,” “No. 15,” “No. 23,” “No. 29,” “Untitled No. 1,” “Untitled No. 2,” “History,” “Sills,” “Donation Street,” “Labor Day,” “William,” “Tops,” “Tilting,” “Attendant Docent,” “The Wet Motorcycle,” “The Galloping Man,” “Anselm,” “Canteen,” and “Rudiments” appeared, with other poems, in *Selected Poems (Poezii ales)* with translation in Romanian by poet and scholar Elena Țăpean (Bibliotheca Universalis, #117, 2017). *Linda or Lydia* and *Stephen’s Lake (a novel in parts)* appeared together as *Two Short Novels (Două romane scurte)* with translation in Romanian by poet and scholar Elena Țăpean (Bibliotheca Universalis, #118, 2017).

Apocryphal text, The Argotist Online, BlazeVOX, Contemporary Literary Horizon (România, #56, #63), Cordite Poetry Review, Poets’ Basement at CounterPunch, Dispatches from the Poetry Wars, Dusie, elimae, The Experioddicist #8, 5_Trope, GAMMM, The Germ #2, hutt, JUXTA, In Posse Review, Lost & Found Times #36, Malleable Jangle, Mauvaise graine v2_en_01, Moria, 9th St. Laboratories, No Røses Review, Nthposition, OCHO #21, Offcourse, Rapsodia 16, Softblow, Spinning Jenny, Turntable + Blue Light, Verse Wisconsin, The Vision Project #1, Washington Review, Why Vandalism?, Word For/Word, Xcp: Cross-Cultural Poetics, Xcp: Streetnotes, X-Peri, ZONE

The Wet Motorcycle

ē · rā/ tiō

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt	15
No. 6	35
No. 7	36
No. 15	37
No. 16	38
No. 23	39
No. 24	40
No. 29	41
Untitled No. 1	42
Untitled No. 2	43
Elegy for Christopher Smart	44
The Valla Problemata	46
Ushio Sho	49
The Canvas to the Wall	51
Crash Course in Logoclastics	54
On Pannarrativity	57
Concrete to Eidetic	61
History	70
Sills	73
Donation Street	75
Labor Day	77
William	78
Tops	80
Tilting	82
Attendant Docent	84
The Wet Motorcycle	86
The Galloping Man	88
Anselm	90
Canteen	91
Rudiments	92
Linda or Lydia (a short novel)	93
Stephen's Lake (a novel in parts)	114

The Wet Motorcycle

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt one

Zone

Inter

Alia viva voce

Soirée des Himmels

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt two

Quote il
Unquote indifference

A
La Tartuffe

Obbligato
Hoi *rhetor*
Polloi
China daguerre

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Bolt three

Tumble

Lively hearties

Starboard

Hear me eight ahoy psyche portmanteau

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Bolt four

En

Direct

Fons et origo

Gainingly concoct a booty

Uno

Actu

Nth

Degreeably

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt five

Porpentine

A

Tammany Prague noses

Re

Ed

A

Jack o'

Pulpit Heidi

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt six

D

O

U

R henge

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt seven

Old

Black

Rain

Water empty boxes

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt eight

Cleat *U* oder

Dumme

Kriegsmarine

Alp o'baton der Stab

Graced

Thrice roebuck lapping

Dunkel

Seiche Roman sarsen z

B

Drums

Trumpets

Prodigia

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt nine

Ritist mime a luau

Adobe 'ist

O'

Dung hut slung inflexion *ritus* awl 'ips

Ab

Ovo sang ich dien z

B

Seat rent (*f & l*) C'est selon ether addict

X

Ray

Aperture

Hyena 'ist o'toreador

Profligate

Poi la coda *veto*

Poco

A poco *totem*

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt ten

Ding

In cornered four maxims

Ibn

Mightn't chaste Mary *i*

E

Baubo toque unfreiwillige *up*

La

Croce salva

Le

Roi

La

Gentaglia

In

Re

Cathedral

Chi ardo e'ncendo tutta

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt eleven

Samenesses *re*

A

G

A

In

Gainingly autonomy

Imban

Signs wonders

Semblances A

G

A

In *re*

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt twelve

Lill

Epileptic

Adit

Canaille *superporte*

Triune

Top hat from

Below

Upward

Mermen

Thirst Mercator pool

O'

Satyr *bad* denude

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt thirteen

Vying il

Buon

Tempo

Saura *epigone* Hic leap

Et

Nunc mottoed

Grund

Abgrund *At*

Bout

Aft

D

Juan

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt fourteen

Whir

Unuttered Johannine

M

Ersatz caducei thyrsi

Adz

Adz novissima

Ersatz

Adz

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt fifteen

Panta rhei speech God merge

Echt

Comus

Congener bachelor Legree

Ajax

Madded demi mondaine

Epi

Blast

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt sixteen

Conch

Transcendental

Meiotic

Ink

Areas

17

18

19

Au

Fond rococo

Louis

9

A

Chisel

Furibundal

Vulva

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt seventeen

Opiate

Is Homer parti pris

Spaniel epileptic piano

Key

Yous

Its combo ruere in servitium

Dogs

Opiate *Is Homer rhesus tuba*

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt eighteen

Luce in arte

Err

We *affects*

Will pais paizon (young idiot)

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt nineteen

Surgent

I'm sublimer far

Partitions

3

Con

Questa musica

Et

Cecidere odia pur sang aborts facetiae

The Wet Motorcycle

Bolt twenty

Por Deu
Omnipotent

Ce
Fu pechiez dash my brain L'

Aspre vie
Words
New
Woe

The Wet Motorcycle

No. 6

An

Exploded

View. Rushing looker-on.

Boreal ascensive

No-

Where gone.

Cloud- or

Milk-puddle. Airless eye.

Old

Mother

Geyser—

Zeppelin pump.

The Wet Motorcycle

No. 7

Wan

Palm a

Lap-

Fold—

Curly-

Pated

Boy.

Affected

Filumform

Gleam

Androgynous

Anatomy.

The Wet Motorcycle

No. 15

Static

Boughs re-

Call a

Tender poise

Drunken

Boys be-

Hold a

Lifeless choir

Stoke

Notes into

Wooden

Flutes

The Wet Motorcycle

No. 16

Mechanic a
Spit o'
Ecstatic re-
Lease

Javelineer
Crested
Quiver a-
Gog stride

The Wet Motorcycle

No. 23

Throed

Afore o'dumbing

Cast

Sculptured

Thew a

Clamored whir

Lance-

Leaf swept upend

The Wet Motorcycle

No. 24

Dr.

Hottentot

Eloah

Gadgetry impute

Easelwise

Aorist limning

Careted

Rood epiphanies

The Wet Motorcycle

No. 29

Airs

Rise in
Waves above an
Airfield.

Sails

A-
Head, un-
Said, detonate an

Un-

Thought. A
Phallic
Steeple, inverted

Un-

Christianlike. A
Breach
Before dancing

Air

Balloons.
Imperialistic
Psychic mesas.

Reich

Helmets.

Id

Tor.

The Wet Motorcycle

Untitled No. 1

A balloonman, laughing wildly, stands on a corner. Opposite him a younger man is selling juices and nuts. Both men have an eye out for the patrolman who is rather indifferent to their poverty and would cart them both off to jail.

A patrolman appears, walking in the direction of the young vender. Greeting the patrolman, the young vender offers him a grapefruit, which he accepts with a nod of the head. Delighted, the young vender extends his generosity with a bag of nuts, which the patrolman declines and with a wave of his hand summons over a patrolwagon into which he loads the young vender and his goods.

The balloonman—now alarmed and fearing for his freedom—slips out of his shoes and with a tug on his balloon-strings rises up and out of the patrolman's reach.

The Wet Motorcycle

Untitled No. 2

The artist paints upon his canvas two old and graying citizens. Both are lost and their bodies stutter: Eastward, westward, stop movement, start, stop movement, start. One of them, a woman, she wants the highway. The other, a man, he is searching for the marketplace. The woman is now a bird—a common brown bird with no distinctive markings—and she flies off the canvas. The old man, since he has two left feet, walks on into counter-clockwise circles.

The Wet Motorcycle

Elegy for Christopher Smart *

Chris-
he
me a
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com-
London,
a few years

sher and
buted.
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to be some
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expression
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to be

recognition
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covered it;
was

The Wet Motorcycle

insight.
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detailed

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art
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wrote
in spite
and it is
or had
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time. "Let"
and
s make it
of it
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ing on
in
s well as
twelve
pirit is

horal Society)

*I became interested in Christopher Smart back in 1978 by way of the composer Benjamin Britten. Britten's "Rejoice in the Lamb" (a Festival Cantata) is a setting of parts from Smart's long poem, *Jubilate Agno*. Included (in Britten's cantata) are some lines from what is probably Smart's best known lines, "For I Will Consider My Cat Jeoffry." Here Smart takes his beloved cat as an example of nature praising God by being simply what the Creator intended it to be. Probably the popularity of this poem is due to its inclusion in Pound's anthology. (Bucke does not include Smart on his list of instances—lesser, imperfect or otherwise—but I think maybe so.)

The Wet Motorcycle

The Valla Problemata *

The stairway. . . . from “The Jacob’s Ladder” by Denise Levertov.

*Show me the geometer’s points
lines & surfaces!
(nowhere to be found)*

happy & beautiful
& without thought of daily affair
(sometimes too palette pink & blue?)

(E’) banditry—
these ranks-landless & distressed

inward upon himself
pessimistic & escapist
(to know, to do, to aspire to)
E’ mai possibile riflettere. . . . E’.
E’ per aver visto una mano glorificata di Gesù.
*Che dire? Le ampiezze smisurate del firmamento
in un frammento di specchio?*

the distance of lines & angles.
the shame & anger in the looks of a man.

& how my blushing gladness *brrrrrrrings*. . . .

“The stairway is not
a thing of gleaming strands” she said.
In my dream I lost sensation in my legs.

the clothes make the man
(or, prospects
& anxious at the same time
make us happy)
The *I* in *writhe* & the *I* in *spice*.

The Wet Motorcycle

“An apple falling freely has no force acting upon it.”
This point, a “véritable retour à Archimède”
that V. used against himself.

V. saw Mayakovski at the Tretyakov.
“A student of the history of classical scholarship
must know something of the chemistry of inks and of paper.”
“The character of peoples as revealed by their vocabularies?”
“It is as if Leonardo had had the heretical idea
of making his Christian saint a pendant of his heathen Leda,
setting alongside the hymn of voluptuous womanhood
the glorification of the perfect body of a young man.”
“Fermi’s unusual versatility made him a *rara avis*,
excelling both as theoretician and as experimentalist.”
When Aveling was nearly well, Eleanor suddenly took poison.
How sad life has been all these years. . . .

V. practiced ventriloquism
by talking with figs in his mouth.
His wealthy father said, “That is impolite.”
He thought to spit them out,
but thinking twice, *he swallowed hard. . . .*

V. is doing Mahler,
V. is doing Liszt,
V. has little Timmy on his hip.
Timmy says all men are *come-again*
& Guinness’s the water of life.
Timmy says the Irish have the gift of the song.

*(It is perhaps insufficiently realized
that V. himself—during his early years
in the Jacopo della Quercia—
had a very considerable influence
on the development of the Sienese Sassetta.)*

raiments, voice & body
(to do, the doing. & what is done)
“As a woman, I feel. . . .”
(out of awe, or love, or fear of my person.)

The Wet Motorcycle

in spite of the temptation to become unreal.)

“One ought to hope for grace, or at least a sense of humor.

It is the conscious ones who are most hard on themselves.”

V. knows the power of a recaptured memory

V. knows the satisfaction of the instinct

V. knows to separate his perceptions

from the emotions aroused by & accompanying them

V. knows the actual, the apparent, & then what should not be

V. knows eternity, androgyny & the senses of Orlando

V. knows the science of the impossible

V. knows the overcoming of adversity—

the classic struggle of one's aspirations with one's circumstances

“By no means is it easy for those to rise from obscurity whose noble qualities are hindered by straitened circumstances at home.”

V. knows Charlotte Rampling & Dominique Sanda

V. knows Lotte Lenya & Ilse Steppat

V. knows Hanna Schygulla & Liliana Cavani & Oriana Fallaci

& all V.'s man's men are Hemingway

But consider whom he detests.

whom he would choose to possess.

(all very normal & on schedule)

“ . . . a bull, an Aztec. Fight another man. . . . ”

V. thinks all adult women are mad about him

(& some are)

In the falsest of false positions, V.

(has just enough decency to know his position for what it is)

How hard it is to destroy a man.

How hard to eliminate so radical a rival.

“That sexual needs and passions may at times be related to murderous impulses has of course long been known.”

(the time is the late 1930s)

*“The Valla Problemata” is wantonly based upon the life of the Italian Renaissance humanist, Lorenzo Valla.

The Wet Motorcycle

Ushio Sho

*homage to Ushio Amagatsu**

distance
image
dance /

dance
image
painting /
(*think / of a pre-historic / comes to mind*)

drawn
other / than language
(*as if / hid . . .*) (*other than / language*)

cave
(I see it)

cave
(flat / splits / pro-jections / rock)
pass my eye

the painter
in the cave
(with *the painter*)

The Wet Motorcycle

the painting
drawn
(*memories / copy* of the world)
images
(directly)

standing in the cave
face to face with (a) wild animal (s)
Me
(*chases / watches / me chasing*)
passing
Me
(distance)
Me
(*sees / listens / seeing / to look*)

(I)
recognize
(I)
react
(I)
stop *seeing / to look*
the cave

*Ushio Amagatsu, dance director of Sankai Juku. *Ushio Sho* is a transduction of *Jomon Sho* (homage to a Japanese prehistoric era). “In the beginning was the body.”

The Canvas to the Wall

1.

the chasing after epitomes.
for which I have, to hand, the praise.

a, sign, out of hand.
the, hopping, and, pointing of fingers.

walking home from the movies after dark
picturing Faraday

with thumb, forefinger and middle finger
held at mutual right angles.

I love the way this couplet looks.
mirror play.

his straight black lips. and ends in hands.
his straight black lips. and ends in hands.

and if it is at all agreeable to me.
the chasing after epitomes.

2.

a man's patent leather slipper.
mirror play.

for which I have, to hand, the praise.
by incomprehension or by bad faith.

and if it is at all agreeable to me.
the parallel legs.

The Wet Motorcycle

the parallel arms.
the body of straight lines.

we can say this about her
though she has given no age

She can no longer eat peanuts. She can no longer eat
doughnuts. She can no longer eat chocolate.

what about it, this
not me refusing to be not

3.

sun up. sparrow eye. morning to do.
you are born. you are loved. you are going.

if it pleases you
any real persons, living or dead.

for which I have, to hand, the praise.
by incomprehension or by bad faith.

the, hopping, and, pointing of fingers.
a, sign, out of hand.

I understand the to be there in the morning light.
I understand the to be a part of the daybreak.

and to want for nothing. And upon awakening,
feeling alone and feeling regret,

to reexplore your room,
your warp and corrugation.

The Wet Motorcycle

4.

And as a point in favor of this view,
both full-face and profile sides at once,

the effect produced on entering is canceled upon leaving.
when you see the words

MERCHANDISE
BARGAIN

DON'T PAY RETAIL
whose house are you in

to want for nothing
to be made needful by a loving god

my mystery.
the nature of my mystery.

has replaced the external.
I occupy.

Crash Course in Logoclastics

Four Cardinal Notes of Logoclastics

(1) An exploration of *indeterminacy*. (2) There is *in effect* a dislocation of discourse, i.e., the discourse *is not anterior to* the reading, but (3) occurs in the text's being *redd*.

Consider, that in our post-logocentric climate, works of logoclastics may be all that is left to us. Discourse is no longer centered in words — whose stability of meaning is ob-literate, strictly expunged from the letter — but occurs in the text's being redd.

The term, *logoclastics*. *Logos*, is discourse. *Clastics*, to break. Logoclastics, *the break in discourse*. A dislocation of discourse. *Dislocation*, is the putting-out-of-place. Discourse is dis-located to the part (-icipation, the activity) of the reader.

Redding, is a putting-in-order.

To the conscious, deliberative, intentional act of signification.

To induce a narrativity in the reader!

In regard to a *foregrounding*, either in the text or of a “reading strategy,” *logoclastics* may be said to (4) foreground *the communicative value of discourse*.

Indeterminacy. Not to be confused with “indeterminism,” “inconclusive” or “uncertainty.” The root of this word is *terminus*, “limit.” *Indeterminacy* = “the state or quality of being indeterminate.” *Indeterminate* = “having inexact limits.” My alternate word for “indeterminacy” is *eratio*. We will recall that for Plato there are in the universe only four kinds of things, which are called *limit*, *indeterminacy*, the *result* of mixing these two, and the *cause* of their mixing. And that reason (or, *ratio*) imposes *limit* on what is indeterminate. It is important to note that two of Plato's four “kinds of things” are forerunners of two of Aristotle's four causes: “indeterminate” is akin to the material cause, and “limit” is akin to the formal cause.

The Wet Motorcycle

Where concerns logoclastics, indeterminacy is not the divorce of *the material* and *the formal*. They are taken together — and so, *eratio*. The point of distinction being that *the discourse is not anterior to the reading (but occurs in the text's being redd)*.

Eratio [defined]

E = “indeterminate,” “material”

ratio = “limit,” “form,” “intellectual content”

“intellectual content” — behind every thought is a series of thoughts supportive of and supporting that thought, a series of thoughts that are, so to speak, behind the scenes, or, subliminal, no thought occurs in isolation (without relation) but is supported by a series of thoughts

it is in this sense that “intellectual content” is always already formed

e·ratio

ratio —

to think it, the inward thought, the name of it, the noun

o·ratio —

to speak it, the oratory

e·ratio —

to show it, to write it, to make it visible:

the complemental pointing finger!

Vide “The Death of Socrates” (painting by Jacques-Louis David, 1787). Socrates is thinking a point, he is speaking his point, and he is showing that he is making a point by pointing with his index finger *to show an exclamation point!*

The Wet Motorcycle

Our post-logocentric climate. This is, first of all, a call to action (a call to consciousness). What has been obscured (“lost,” “post,” “past”) is the consciousness of signification — the consciousness of signification as an action, as a doing, as a conscious doing-with-deliberation (*a redding*). This consciousness does not awaken us to a degeneration, but (and to the opposite effect) to a higher level of purpose and procedure — to the consciousness of *signification as a doing-with-deliberation*. (To be conscious of signification, of *the-bond-that-holds-between*.) To the conscious, deliberative, intentional act of signification.

Logoclastics breaks up the rhythm of the romantic line!

Logoclastics = *the break in discourse*. The range of the works of logoclastics is great, and includes not only those works that are deliberately explorations of indeterminacy, in themselves *and* in the redding, but all works that present us with a break or dislocation of discourse, all works that in effect occasion (BUT MORE TO THE POINT, THAT AWAKEN AN AWARENESS OF) the conscious, deliberative, intentional act of signification. *All works that occasion a narrativity in the reader*. For starters, all works that begin in the consciousness that ours is a post-logocentric climate, all works that begin in the consciousness that discourse is no longer centered in words but occurs in the text’s being redd, in the conscious, deliberative, intentional act of signification — *these are works of logoclastics!*

One of the cardinal notes of postmodern poetry is *the will to make play*, to make play of language, to make of language a building blocks, to make of language a sand box, but this can only *create value* if the objective is to recover, to recover language *in the conscious, deliberative, intentional act of signification* as the stuff, *the physis*, of poetry.

Ours is an age of anxiety, of dissociation of sensibility, of pessimism, cynicism, incredulousness. Ours is the age of canned laughter. (There is an analogue for this in poetry.) We — *we poets!* — must struggle to be free of this.

On Pannarrativity

There is a famous image out of Ralph Waldo Emerson. It is from his first book, the ninety-five page volume, *Nature* (1836) and it is from the first chapter, or, *subject*, entitled, “Nature.” It is the image, or, *notion*, of the “transparent eyeball.” Emerson writes, “Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God. . . . I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty.”

What this notion, this “transparent eyeball,” describes is a mode of perception (indeed, a mode of consciousness), a way of seeing, a way of knowing (*a way of being*).

This *mode of perception* is a perception that is both perception and apperception, that is simultaneously *perception* (of external things) and the *apperception* that is the inner state’s awareness of itself.

This mode of perception (pictured in the words) described by the image of the “transparent eyeball,” admits of “the currents of the Universal Being.” These “currents” enter and “circulate through,” they are known by way of, the “transparent eyeball.”

What I mean by “pannarrativity” — this is writing in the *mode of perception* that is described by the image of the “transparent eyeball.”

Pannarrativity: furthermore:

narratives — *fragments of narrative* [this is “quotation”] removed from their original context and placed [in-corporated / *in string*] into a new context take on new meanings (while retaining something of their original intention).

Narrative — the word / logos — is everywhere.

The world is a narrative.

The Wet Motorcycle

The world “writ large.” Pan-narrativity.

quotation / connotation / denotation / quotation

“The mica glitter in sand.”

“The aftertaste of peels.”

All descriptions are quotations from the pannarrative.

Pannarrativity is making quotation.

The pannarrative text. If “text-collage” is the general term for such, then a “text collage” composed of *fragments* (word fragments, words, sentences, verses, elements [quotation]) of narrative (*narrative* as *found* / appropriation) “stitched” together. It is a sort of “list” or “roll call.”

The pannarrative poem begins by seeing all the world as one great narration — a narrative that is known in proportion to the degree of the relation of its parts.

As an instance of the *pannarrative text* (or, of, *the collage text*) I here do offer a text. And notice, please, the composition, the assemblage, is of *things* from the world *writ large*, from the world encircling me, and these are mingled with my own sensibilities, with my own emotions (and that my poem is the analogue to the *expressionist* depiction, *and thus an ekphrasis of sorts*). [In poetry, and perhaps in all poetry, but especially in *expressionist* poetry, the more “things” are themselves, the more they signify something else.] In the act of placing these *things* into my poem, I am citing them, saying their names, *making quote of them* and as though listing them, calling them out, appropriating them (this is what I mean by “appropriation” — things are not quoted, or, *appropriated*, from other pre-existing texts [this is not a *language-cut-and-paste* from pre-existing texts] but here these *things* are found in the world encircling me, the world as one great narration, *the world writ large*):

The Wet Motorcycle

Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear*

the reed of a loom
the guideways, of a loom, or

when suddenly, when suddenly
this is spring, and this is summer

and this, this is open sky.
the birds resemble a man.

dandelion. giddyng.
budded. spree.

roundly, with joy
for nothing and for everything

the day, with my own heart
too soon, arrayed. this haste

this pasturing. this coffee companion.
this cup. this yellow sky

*The Dutch artist Vincent van Gogh left us a series of self-portraits, and among these the bandaged-ear self-portraits, upon which my poem is based. After van Gogh I am moved to feel there is a certain solitude in extreme emotion, a certain solitude in the sensibilities that cannot but know in such manner and that cannot but find expression in like passion and color (and as in *Iris*, where the I rises, and in *Wheat Fields*, where I am beside him). I tried to capture, to *express!* a fragment of that in my poem.

The pannarrative poem, then, is constituted of fragments of narrative (which in their dislocative / disjunctive state are potentially plurisignificative) and *uses juxtaposition as a principle of composition*. (And like the metaphor, produces semantic changes, *and thereby increases language!*)

The Wet Motorcycle

While not quite on the level of the metaphor, I see *pannarrativity* as coming to be a sort of stand-in for the metaphor, requiring, to its own end, an intuitive competence — an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars [*an eye for resemblances*] as found in the disjunction (the logoclastics) that posits the juxtaposition. (And like the metaphor, produces semantic changes, *and thereby increases language!*)

It becomes clear: the difference — between the pannarrative poem and what is commonly referred to as “collage poem.”

The neologism increases language in the calculative way of the denotation, while the metaphor increases language in the poetic way of the connotation.

The Wet Motorcycle

Concrete to Eidetic

The visual poem has become a genus of poetry unto itself. When we speak of “visual poetry,” we no longer have in mind or make reference to *just* the “pattern” (or “shape,” or “emblematic”) poem.

I prefer to call these “eidetic poems” — from the Greek *eidos*, meaning “that which is seen” — because the idea is given directly to the eye and *thus* a mental image is formed — one is interpreting *a figure* which seems to be external, in contrast to the interpretation of words *as such*.

The visual poem has become a genus of poetry unto itself. When we speak of “visual poetry,” we no longer have in mind or make reference to *just* the “pattern” (or “shape,” or “emblematic”) poem, in the manner, say, of George Herbert’s *Easter Wings*, his *Altar*, or his *Cross*, or Lewis Carroll’s *Mouse’s Tale*, or John Hollander’s *Swan and Shadow*, but we may be speaking of an ever extensible field or *genre* of poetry (yea, genre of *writing*) with respect to which we can discern certain common characteristics according to which the “eidetic poem” is but one species unto a genus. Of these common characteristics, we may say that as a general rule, the “visual poem,” or “eidetics” as such, *shows* as well as or in addition to what it *tells*, and these two ends are *complementary* in their exemplification. As a general rule, the visual poem has available to its *reader* the occasion or opportunity for a double (yea, a potentially multifold) and often (but not necessarily) coinciding, *if not simultaneous*, interpretation (or, *understanding*). I would hold these decidedly abstract rules to apply to the Pompeian *Paternoster*, up to and beyond Herbert to Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, to now.

What I refer to as, “the poetic template,” is the outlining pattern or *eidos* that (certainly traditionally, *but then in visual poetry as well and with a sense all its own*) coincidentally accrues to the poem upon its being quilled or scripted or inscribed or however recorded or preserved, or reproduced, whether by handwriting or typewriting or typographical (or word processor) design. The poetic template, generally speaking, consists of *the margin* and *the indentation* (*the margin and indentation pattern*).

The Wet Motorcycle

The poetic template corresponds to, is communicated to, the eye; it is seen and it is read (interpreted and understood), but it is not, strictly speaking, heard or recited.

It is the poetic template that undergoes a dislocation in “open field poetics.” Predominantly, a dislocation of the margin. For while “open field” eschews the uniformity of the (nevertheless elastic) poetic template, it freely admits of anything and everything else. And yet, not unintentionally, while the open field procedure eschews the “traditional” margin and indentation poetic template pattern, it brings to the page a poetic template — *of margins and indentations and subdivisions* — all its own. The open field poetic template — while certainly in a sense *eidetic* — is in nowise *anterior* to the poem, is in a manner of speaking *interior* to the poem, and is properly given to insight and inference.

Vide *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, ed. J. A. Cuddon (3rd ed., 1992). The entry for “concrete poetry/verse” (p. 184) reads in part, “The object is to present each poem as a different shape. It is thus a matter of pictorial typography which produces ‘visual poetry.’” The entry for “pattern poetry” (p. 693) reads in part, “Probably Oriental in origin, this kind of poem has its lines arranged to represent a physical object, or to suggest action/motion, mood/feeling; but usually shape and motion.”

Vide *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. A. Preminger, F. J. Warnke and O. B. Hardison (enlarged ed., 1974). The entry for “pattern poetry” (p. 607) reads in part, “Verse in which the disposition of the lines is such as to represent some physical object or to suggest motion, place, or feeling in accord with the idea expressed in the words. The pattern poem, or ‘shaped’ poem, first appears in Western-world literature in the works of certain Gr. bucolic poets, notably in a few poems of Simias of Rhodes (ca. 300 B.C.), later much imitated.”

NB Where concerns *complementarities*, the operative words here are *in accord with the idea expressed in the words*. Thus *the pattern, or shape, and the idea expressed in the words*, must *complement* or *complete* each other, *and must be generative the one of the other!* There is a subtle and important distinction between “a complementarity” and “an equivalence.” While “an equivalence” is an equality of value (say, for instance, the illustration of a content), a “complementarity” is held to supply a complement, to complete or to make complete. The complementarity is in no wise tangential, but is of, or, toward the constitutive essence of the composition (i.e., of the object). I maintain, the

The Wet Motorcycle

complementarities of eidetic poetry (if not of all “concrete poetry”) *are equally* (though not necessarily in extent or to degree) *and essentially generative the one of the other!*

In this sense, “concrete poetry” (and “pattern” and “shaped”) would be synonymous with “visual poetry.”

When considering the history of “concrete poetry” (which is to say, of its forerunners, all which are by degrees approximations) it is most fruitful to take into account all the various names by which it has been called. “Concrete poetry” is a development of *carmen figuratum* (“figure poem” or “shaped poem”). At this point in time, it would seem that “visual poetry” (or, “vis-po”) is a recent development of “concrete poetry.” Each term seems to denote both a generality (a genus) and a specificity (a species). It would seem that of all the terms in current usage, “visual poetry” is the most general, while being also the least informed.

What is *eidōs*? It is language. *Languē. Chōra.* The sea of language. The sea of relationality. *The great postulated transcendent totality of system.* It is *mystici corporis*. It is *antiquus mysticusque*. It is *prisca sapientia*. It is *logos*. It is logical space. It is plastic.

Not photograph, but eidograph. Not photographic, but eidographic. Not *a showing* made with light, but *a showing* of the . . . *making conscious the unconscious*. The made-visible e-merges (from obscurity — *clair-obscur*) depicting (a “looking-through,” the *trans-parens*) what takes place *below* our (superficial) verbal consciousness.

The eidograph is a picture of language-in-eidos, of language in conceptus, language in situ, in general, in ideal form. An eidograph is a telling by way of showing, it is a concrete telling, it is the special poésie of the eidetic poet. *The eidograph is a picture of language-in-eidos.*

What does it mean to say of one thing, this is a “depiction,” and of another, this is a “reality in itself”? Is this to deny of the depiction a “reality in itself”? Is this to deny of the “reality in itself” a significance that transcends that “reality”? For instance, let’s speak of value (if not of ontology). There is value in the depiction, and there is value in the thing that is a “reality in itself” — there is value in its being a “reality in itself,” there is value in that “reality,” that “in-itself-ness.”

The Wet Motorcycle

[This is a painting: Washington's crossing of the Delaware River. In terms of its being a painting, it is a reality in itself. In terms of its being a depiction, *it points away from itself to something else* (something that is not present except that it is present-to-mind). It has value both in that it is a painting and a depiction. But it is a reality in itself only in terms of its being *a painting*.]

There is value in the depiction *in that* it is a depiction, and *in how* it is a depiction, and *in why* it is (said/seen to be) a depiction. When we say there is value in the "reality in itself," we are saying that "reality in itself," as such, is a value, and "as such" is given to mean that it is not about anything other than itself, it does not stand for anything other than itself, it is self-referential, it does not point away from itself but *means* only in so far as *it is* (in so far as it is *what* it is, if not *that* it is). It has value as an independent object. The object has a certain "objectivity" about it (a certain *whereness*, though we do not wish to restrict this whereness, this *ubiqity* to the "prison house of the page").

(One might say it is "anti-mimetic," although to use the term "anti" would seem to attribute to the object *intention*, and it does not seem possible to me that a "reality in itself" can have *intention*, and so to say something is "anti-mimetic" is not to say something about the object but about the purpose of the object, at which point we have gone outside that "reality in itself." And yet, such an object has been, and still is, held to stand for, to speak to or to otherwise illuminate certain artistic and/or social concerns — indeed, we might say it is *programmatic*, or even *theory laden*. In which case the "reality in itself" is positioned as *an object hypothesis*, something given in advance, and accepted without judgment. *Given A, is not B analogous to C?* This does seem to give the "reality in itself" a significance that transcends that "reality." It does seem to stand for and to point to something *outside* itself, even if that something outside is *just* an object hypothesis.)

And herein lies its "concreteness." But to speak of "concrete poetry" in terms of this understanding of the term "concreteness" is, or so it seems to me, to speak of only a particular kind of concrete poetry, and a kind of concrete poetry that is possibly more a form of art than of poetry. Why, then, call it poetry? Because it employs words (language)? Why not, "concrete writing" or even "language art"? It seems to me, if a form of writing is to partake of the title, of the encomium, "poetry," we should be able to discern in it some or other poetic elements, *or even poetic forebears*. . . .

And besides, poetry doesn't have exhibitions, "visual poetry" has exhibitions.

The Wet Motorcycle

meaning / naming

We can say: *They are not against meaning, but naming, because to name would be to point away, to a reality outside, to a separate reality, to an “other.” To what is not.*

But, as for the work itself, as for that “reality in itself,” how, *if it is to have meaning*, can it not be in some sense mimetic?

To mean, to signify, must correspond to something other, even if that something other were a mirror image of itself.

Or is the “reality in itself” unintelligible? *Can the unintelligible be [be rendered] beautiful?*

We can say: *This is writing that is not writing words. This is writing that is showing words, but not words qua words, that is to say not words as signs (parole), but rather words as symbols.*

are these *words as symbols* “verbal”? do they “express”? or are they “visual”?

faced with a symbol, what do we see? what do we know? what comes to mind?
what does it mean to be “in community” with a symbol?

to communicate / to be *in community* / to hold in common

ainissesthai — “to speak darkly,” “to speak in riddles” *Follow the lion’s gaze.*

Eidography? Symbollurgy?

Draw for me the hieroglyphic of the world. [By necessities *a griphos?*]

Eidography is the symbollurgy of the hieroglyphic of the world.

What does the hieroglyphic of the world look like? [By necessities *a griphos?*]

The Wet Motorcycle

intellection / ideation

Let us consider: “poetry in general.” I offer here a simple proposition: “The poem” exists on the page, in concrete language, in the form of a *deposition* (“a putting down”), but *the poetry* exists, or rather *comes into being*, or, *is realized*, in the mind (via the conscious intellection / the conscious ideation) of the reader [the redding]. While “the poem” exists in deposition, *the poetry* resides with the reader [the redding]. Now where concerns concrete poetry, but specifically the concrete poetry that is the “reality in itself,” we can say that *the whereness* of *the poetry* of concrete poetry is at the level of that deposition. Now bear in mind, this is not to say of that “reality in itself” that it does not have *or show* an *eidos* (a form, an eidetic form), as in fact this *eidos* is this “text’s” entire *raison d’etre*.

Bear in mind the difference between the “concrete” *eidos* and that *eidos* that accompanies the text of “poetry in general.” In the case of “poetry in general,” here we find an *eidos* that is properly understood to be a margin and indentation pattern, this pattern, or scheme, or, template (I call this “the poetic template”) signals to the reader a number of things, beginning with, “I am a poem.” Compare the outward eidetic form of a sonnet to, say, Solt’s “Moonshot Sonnet” or to Christian Morgenstern’s “Fisches Nachtgesang.”

We can draw the outlines of three distinct types of concrete poetry: Let us call the first type, “concrete,” and here find that text that *is identical with what it shows*, that is the “anti-mimetic” text, the “reality in itself,” the text that *means* but does not *name*. Let’s call the next type, “shape,” and here find, among others, George Herbert’s “Easter Wings” and John Hollander’s “Swan and Shadow.” And let us, but provisionally, call the third type “abstract,” and say that here “language elements” are not employed as signals-to-meaning but as *symbols* suggestive of a system of meaning, *a thought structure*.

I think we can safely say of all three types that each is, in a sense, a “reality in itself.” Moreover, to the degree that each type presents, or is, a spatial arrangement (and to the extent that such presents, or is, or is perceived to be, a shape, a figure, an outline, a pattern, or to be meaningful or significant visually), I think we can safely say of all three types that each is, or presents, *an eidos*. And on that basis, each type — “concrete,” “shape,” “abstract” — is, I maintain, a type of “eidetic poetry.” But this is not to restrict “*eidos*” to a form that is perceived only visually, for while we may speak of *an eidetic element* that is *given to instantaneous apprehension*, as per to look upon, we can also speak of *an eidetic*

The Wet Motorcycle

element that is given to conscious intellection and ideation, for indeed while it is one thing to see a spatial arrangement, it is another thing to know it as meaningful (and indeed, as significant).

As for *this eidos* (as we speak of it here as the visual component or *complementarity*), I think it is this aspect of the concrete-poetry composition that Mary Ellen Solt is referring to when she says of concrete poetry (in her footnote to “Moonshot Sonnet”) that it is “supranational, supralingual.” And this can be so because there is no language barrier interfering with the instantaneous apprehension of the object (its shape or pattern, its spatial arrangement). Here we find the truly supranational nature of eidetic poetry. But this is not to reduce eidetic poetry to its eidetic (i.e., “visual”) complementarity only, as then we would be acknowledging only one half of the equation. We must also acknowledge its poetic elements, its “lingual” or language complementarity, as here we find an *eidos, a form*, of a different nature, the *eidos*, or form, of the noun.

We’ll skip over the second type of eidetic poetry (the “shape poem”) except to mention that in Herbert’s “Easter-wings” and in Hollander’s “Swan and Shadow” we find instances of the consummate working out (the working together) of both the eidetic and poetic elements (both serve to complete each other, *as complementarities*, and both are generative the one of the other), and we’ll move on to the third type, the “abstract” eidetic poem. It may seem a contradiction in terms to speak of *an abstract concrete poem*, that is unless we bear in mind a keen distinction:

Quite simply, concrete is to the senses as abstract is to the mind.

Consider: a picture drawn in words [a narrative, say], however detailed or explicit, will always be *an abstraction* (literally *a drawing-away, a separation*) from nature, requiring conscious intellection and ideation on the part of the reader, whereas to see a picture is a matter of instantaneous apprehension — it is there (it has *whereness*), it appears to the senses, it has a material, perceptible existence, it is a “reality in itself.”

NB The forms found in the first type of concrete poetry are rarely found in nature, unlike those found in the second type, which usually are. This is important if the “forms” found in the first type are to be considered “nonrepresentational,” and a “reality in itself,” and not a depiction (*not mimetic*) from nature! We may ask, then, just what kind of forms are to be found in the first type of concrete poetry. . . ? I do not think it will be an imposition on these works (to the contrary, it may

The Wet Motorcycle

increase them) to say of these forms that they are Platonic. (See Plato, *Philebus*, 51a. “I mean not the figures of creatures in real life. I mean a straight line, a curve and the plane and solid figures. These are not relatively beautiful, but are beautiful in their very nature.”) And we should not be surprised to find in the third type, in the “abstract” type, that the same kind of forms apply.

Concrete is to the senses as abstract is to the mind can also be conceived of as *concrete is to what shows as abstract is to what tells*. In the preamble to my *Go Mirrored* [collected in *Six Comets Are Coming* (E-ratio Editions, 2009)] I present this analogy: “We might say, then, that the ‘visual’ component of the concrete poem is to the analogue clock what the semantic component is to the digital clock, in that the one shows what the other tells.”

We must bear in mind, that the “concrete” in “concrete poetry” has always, above all, been rooted in this distinction, in this sense of instantaneous apprehension — as distinct from the conscious intellection of words. There is no contradiction, then, to considering a concrete poetry, an “eidetic poetry,” that is both at basis “concrete” and formally abstract.

Compare / contrast this idea of “instantaneous apprehension” with Pound’s authoritative assertion on *the image* in the “Imagist” poem: “An ‘Image’ is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. . . . It is the presentation of such a ‘complex’ instantaneously. . . .”

Why has concrete poetry become abstract? We must consider our answer in regard to both the “shaped” and the “concrete” poem — that poets have simply given up on depicting shapes and figures from nature. I don’t see this as a matter of talent or ability, but rather, and what is more crucial, as a sign of the “dissociation of sensibility” which while having its origin elsewhere (and in another time) has never ceased to hold sway. We might call this situation “a fragmentation of sensibility,” in which the individual exists “in exploded view” (a consequence, perhaps, of being analyzed to pieces, pieces which relate but find their relation to be problematical). Interest has turned inward, has become intra-subjective, in the knowledge of and in search of and in the exploration of a transcendent system of meaning. If not the collective unconscious, the occupation is with relationality as such (the very nature of interrelation, of interdependence, of mutual aver). If it is not to know, and to subdue, *Langue* — the current, great preoccupation — it is to know and to subdue the self, or perhaps to know and to subdue the world writ large. While willing, and able, to turn from naming, there remains an unwillingness, or an unablence, to turn from meaning. Even the signs turn inward

The Wet Motorcycle

and become symbols, unable to say with certainty but only to suggest (only to show, and to tell, indirectly).

The Wet Motorcycle

History

to wish to pause
and planning, planning to return

are of the page, to reflect
is to reflect, of our own say

and welcome, are key, are enough
or,

are unexpected, are at hand
or sudden

and is, perhaps, again, the very room
to be in company

in company, to see
the page, or turn to see

of any sudden, or, guessing, or play
are enough

be it large or small or van or boon
or,

in turn
at different rates of tour

no inherited fit or repertoire
in mid-career

fit or altered, or pathe or incidental
and there is, immersed

in how, of, say, pretense, or lectern
another note or bar or margin

The Wet Motorcycle

and of the eye
replaced, by sound

the ear can see
a margin or purpose

and of these, to see
not only feeling but is an episode

the chance arrival of pacts
proper to, or, gives way to new

office
is apt, or, to be permitted

done so,
the square of a face

or,
serious and hurry it

each counts, is really stands alone
or are comic, and exact

and curves, into furniture
in a turn, in a tumble

a shrub or suburb
the sudden leads to fit in hand

in no sense of the page
to capture, or ledger, or region

not to say, so unlikely
from time to time, in any landscape

a series of rushes
an arrow off a thread

The Wet Motorcycle

fiery, and even fidgety
before whom, to quite suddenly

a madman,
which marks those who work when they need not

a great house
but because, and, so unlike it, it fits

that these are all, or, so
or,

so to reflect
reflecting is enough, and always, to surprises

Sills

may be conceits
spoken of and into play

the merits
they neither sought of

nor were
a source remote

or,
not strictly

it is called
falls or sill or recent

the relation of the line
to cups or streets or ticket

or,
any sequence

of ordered streets
or landmarks

the expense of to or when
is given sharp to what is air

to what is look
to what is omelettes

the decorative use
spoken of and into play

into the say inconsequence
or,

The Wet Motorcycle

such in some sense were
the bowl and its description

say of a curve
or felicity

the continuity of their suggestion
to falls and sill and ticket

Donation Street

to see, is upon you, my love
accord, of its own room

is dash or passage, a voice
unannounced, beginning, out of cups

and see, a little nearer
as of, or, to see another, an Adam

in pane, or day, or, for, to see
or,

to lie abed
on row, sleepless, and gone again, freely

a braid, as an air, or, can
inarm a gin or reach or compensation, when

a pedal
being able and intelligent, or left untied

are soon, or, in groups
in rest, in taste, or air or still, my love

a sympathetic sound, can, or great day
or,

so is always, so
a visitor, a note, a saying, a style

is lost, or, to fraternity
will have a peer, a, or marks a place

as to color, as to open, to mention and to pause
and so on

The Wet Motorcycle

to sentence

a second eye to a face in profile

or found his posture so delightful, so, when
a flute or voice comes in a distance

and so on, to see, a sound, a turn
a visitor

being followed, to purpose
quieted, as good as settled, or waited, or come up

even,
when there is no moon in the sky

Labor Day

is for
and louder than our own

among and above all the steps
in order to

are needed, see
or

in that fashion
to part company

increased and further drawn
to give,

and say no more
drawn,

or cannot go
to let or do or say

are ramp
and see and at an end

a fold or band
the tuft and wear

The Wet Motorcycle

William

1.

a sally,
out of hand, is giving cupboard

to great aunts,
are likening boys, at scrimmage,

to brocaded hemlines.
And later on,

dressing up is chipping in, for visits
to quiet places.

2.

how, to overhear, is to seeing
is to waking, early on

is to raising, a cloth
in ransom

residing, is remaining
to pedal far, ahead, of shouts

3.

to such, a one, unremarked, by misstep
or violet

pretending, these clothespin soldiers
marching in place,

The Wet Motorcycle

seated in relation to north, can precede
in common,

what is now, and what is giving way
are hidden, coming

to an end
or still unuttered, and again. A voice

seeing to morning,
is hiding grahams into umbrellas,

is hiding sneakers, into manners,
and knowing, is someone, eye to eye

or,
were otherwise unthought of

4.

a lawn, remote, in dither, bottoms
and ever varying

in picture, in summer, upon water and on clouds
to pedal far, ahead, of shouts

The Wet Motorcycle

Tops

1.

a plum or knob, to see
purposes, prior to, or, unlike a knob or fruit

a purchase, or gestalt
in time or in enumeration

the nature of a stick in sand, the nature
of a rib, stuck upright in a palette

before a spry, metaphysician
an accent, passing close, unstoppered

2.

a poem, in simple measure
can say the names of surrogate places,

can count the change in a blind man's cup
a day, in folds, moves, asking leave to come and go

when having heard, are setting works, in geography
to days

when having heard, are breathing deeply
into cups

3.

going, is town to town, changing hands
into cups

The Wet Motorcycle

4.

in act and in objective
another sequence, or condition, in nearness, to

spinning articles, and arrival, at once
a wish or trespass

the entrance of a man.
And as was consonant with sleep in daylight

after hurry, and pursuit, after warp and corrugation
given,

to say, the saying of a fold, this is a face
or,

this is a church, and, this is a moment
in a wheel

a father, and a son, a wife, or, inflection
recovering a no

Tilting

1.

a life, by other means, is tilting
into corners

a life, by other means
can rest, or prise, or, customer, a morning

an epitome, in parenthesis
a passage, or, in correspondence, the solitary arc

now harking, and immovable
is making quote

2.

the situation, out of home
As much is harrowing,

or untried,
the eye, in community.

3.

the pilgrim, in tournament
is getting over, getting on

a life, by other means
is fitting words into corners

a life, by other means
is tilting after cranes

The Wet Motorcycle

4.

and following, in salute
in all the forms of one, whom, some, are

and aptly so
in rooms overlooking quiet places. A chaplet, of prayer

and pension
of groundsmen, in repair, of arms and legs

in repose
a going far, is taking hand

Attendant Docent

1.

a seeing, or turning, after modesty, or departure
or when coming out of sleep

the principle, how, in repeating
or as in, once, honestly, mistakenly

the corners.
for the persistence of a passageway

2.

in aim and in pursuit
let upon, then, and to hold

hearing, can hear, or, that is seen
touching, and looking, and turning to account

the tenses, and the delicacy
And given to the absence of intentions.

3.

being meddlesome, and astir
that it was she when she was honey

or were not cousins, after all
this is the suggestion, this is the unseen

the Helen and Georgina
the lips that move simultaneously

The Wet Motorcycle

And this is the pleasure in pursuit
at hand, in mind, the ideal eye

4.

attendant, and at issue
in appeal, and in economy

A line on call.
and given to the absence of intentions

being random, and audition, familied
and in principle, so

The Wet Motorcycle

1.

of the wives and of the son
are sane, are vest and savage.

of the movements, and repose
are riot, and Samaritan

2.

to follow kit and medal. laying by.
the eye, in evidence

is making prayer
is counting money

a giving thanks or self congratulation
a giving thanks or self congratulation

a person, a principle, who bind and loose
the parallel legs

the parallel arms
the body of straight lines

3.

the ways are few but roses
and there are caterpillars everywhere

and everything is real and everything is illusion,
my love.

The Wet Motorcycle

4.

at fortune, or pasture, a summons
or

roster. a melody or loot
The stilted boot and recollection, charged, delayed

A landscape of one's own. A caper, in recruit.
And darling, openly.

The Galloping Man

1.

placing, a look
a gull

or, recreation, rewards or to a mind
a perfect tool

or, law. At last
if it had been the turning of a water wheel

2.

A rope, or green
standing in, closer

to hand, is lost, in arms
on seeing, early on, a hold, or, in hand

a title, a given space
or,

as upon question, or, appellation, a spur
or, so to convey

3.

in alternating causes, in states and professions
a line on end

in cloth, in measure, in anonymity and in parodies
to vary

The Wet Motorcycle

or,
familiar. Passing fast, in jolly tapers and leagues

and in the interest of descriptions, turning back
to rote places, to notes

and floss
a certain sun, and moon and star

4.

and out of house, a useless emulation
getting to, or, not to use

a looking outward, in secret, deciding
it is latent, and pause

and lasting into song. how does
a body know, here is a hand, and here, is a sentence

or,
what's riding on hearts

Anselm

seeming, as it does, in doing so, to
or,

are capable, and possessing
of invention

stringing fables, and pickets
diversion, and demonstration

a tailor, or teacher
often, taking person

or,
various purposes and means

and men and beginnings
various beginnings

A pose, or situation
in view, both of houses, and cars

cities, and scaffolding
the welcome, and valediction

and earn us, at last
of motive, or character, are certain

ordinary and visible attractions
are certain visible attractions

being named, and neighboring
himself, and someone else

can smile, easily and well
and curious, and silent

The Wet Motorcycle

Canteen

of one to one, is said
or

epic letters
are come to rescue said assertions

one above and one below
to the left, or

face to face
but do not be, a pair, a

parallel and unexpected giving, to
or

in belief
as late as, so, to, merits an assertion, runs

in unexpected pairs, in relations
or,

as in relations.
Say,

in relation, or alike.
And so to cease, or parry.

so, to, cease or closet or border a routine
or

length, but do not be, a pair
a parallel and unexpected giving, to

or,
in belief

Rudiments

This face
that is a vase peering left

and right the nose and chin
of a youth in bloom

is hard won with the uninitiate
Rather,

this pitcher
a lip veering to

and fro an ear or flexure
Regarding Braque,

there are no metaphysicals
nothing is illusion

This face
that is a vase peering left

and right the nose and chin
of a youth in bloom

This pitcher
that is a lip veering to

and fro an ear or flexure
signing handle held in hand

The Wet Motorcycle

Linda or Lydia

a short novel

Methinks it strange enough to loathe for it be not my wont, to rise from beside the sleeping Linda, to gather my possessions—so far I retrieve a scarf from her steamer chest—and find myself, in not one hour's time, beside the calmly awakening Lydia.

Did I still wear Linda's perfume?

If I did it mattered none. For Lydia's subtle address is farseeing.

We made love immediately.

Unto my rousal came a damp, chilly wind. Minute drops of rain—dampened Lydia's curtain—were brought to touch my face and shoulder.

I turn to Lydia. She lay sleeping.

I rose to lower the window.

A graduate, Lydia sought secondary degrees in metaphysics. I, having yet to receive the first, notwithstandingly completed the undergraduate and was permitted graduate instruction.

I paid Lydia nothing save the glance one lends a woman passing to or from his chair.

Midterm, she passes a message:

Bored? It read.

Categorically, I returned.

After class, we walked.

The Wet Motorcycle

“These insipid fellows,” she began. “They are not philosophers but careerists. You’re brighter than they. You can best them all in a dialectic. You ought to speak more frequently.”

I thanked her.

“Often,” she continued, “I find myself preferring your thought over theirs.”

I thanked her. We parted.

Into evening, I found myself conversing with an imaginary Lydia.

Exchanging *bons mots*.

Bold and characteristic Lydia.

A constant guard for her—a fox I moved, class to class, anticipating Lydia. A pattern, her routine, but weekly, it seemed, did our schedules cross.

After class, we spoke of politics.

“Converge,” she began. “Forces do—they must or be dispersed. *Politics! Dictatorships! Religious authoritarians! Fanaticals! Torture!* Wherever the torturing of human beings occurs . . . *nauseating!* What solution? Angels of God coupled with *Uzi* submachine guns?”

It was Lydia’s manner of launching her words, *catapulting finality*.

She offers an address, an occasion to speak at length. I took it.

Forecasted freezing snow. Icy streets.

I, dressed for utmost comfort.

Biting air.

There is Lydia—besweated in black, black pleated woolen skirt and stockings, awaits before a tenement stoop.

I follow into bookish quarters.

She takes my coat. A toast with brandy. . . .

“Friendship!” saluted she.

“To friendship!”

I told of a professor whose instruction, one afternoon, was muddled by his lacking sobriety.

“One cannot speak,” I moralized, “philosophy *und* psychoanalysis whilst drunk.”

“You’re blushing.”

“Am I?” letting brandy to my lips.

The Wet Motorcycle

“So tell me,” she asks, “*why’ve you chosen philosophy?*”

“Alas, are days my time be better pent, methinks, accruing wages.”

“A poet!”

“It came naturally—”

“The poet?”

“*The philosophy.* I studied music. *Lieder.* Then Romantic literature. I was led by the verse of Goethe and Heine to Romantic philosophy. This proved an appeasing influence upon my temperament. I began to view philosophy as yet another literature—a rather poetic literature, too. Schopenhauer. Nietzsche. Descartes—*now there, his Meditations! Truly a poetic masterpiece!*”

“I admit I’ve never read it as such. My tendency has been to concentrate upon the concepts.”

“Indeed,” I continued. “What of the trouble Monsieur Descartes with his most convincing style—”

“And therefore,” she enthused, “the problems begun by *the father of Modern philosophy* are to be resolved—”

“But in a sense only!” I claimed, amused by her quick logic.

“By analysis of his *prose style?*”

“Yes. *That double I.* And by analysis of his terminology. And by analysis of his *sense* of value and interpretation. . . .”

We shared an easy smile. A moment of communion moved between us. The unexpected occurred. How awkward my speech ’til that evening. I arrived expecting to sit most docile a creature whilst she spoke and impressed me no end, but it was I, began to speak and impress no end! An ease, a comfortableness issued forth of her presence. She unlocked my character, engaged my mind as no woman ever could, or attempted, before. I spoke on, most philosophical. This one listening, repeating, contributing. What an audience, this Lydia—smiling, clapping, *thoroughly entertained!*

When, nearing midnight, as I rose to depart, lifting my coat I uncovered a rare recording and mentioned my esteem for the composer. She, with enthusiasm yet unwaning, removed the disc from its sleeve. In voice at once imploring and susceptible, she requested I remain to learn which movement she regarded most.

“Yes,” I said. “*Of course.* It is my favorite too.”

And next I knew we held and kissed and soon, side by side we lay. New lovers.

The Wet Motorcycle

Waking together, our eyes met with morning. A shaft of sunlight infiltrated our peace via seams in her curtain. Together we espied the motes an unbroken dance in the sunbeam.

Prior plans abandoned, we found that weekend ours. We bathed, and guessed each other's horoscope and fortune.

How dissimilar, our pasts—she, a country life, and I a city one since birth.

Lydia spoke no foreign language. I teased her with French and German and Italian phrases.

We conversed. We loved.

“Still, there remains the initial consideration,” she began after a time, referring us again to our prior concern.

Increased in admiring her inquisitiveness, I withheld interlocution, inciting solo inquiry.

“There remains the initial thoughts,” once again, “initial doubts, uncertainties. The curiosity motivating someone to philosophize,” came her restatement, except that unbeatable manner was diminished, her voice modified with impatience.

“Yes,” I replied, “there is that *initial* and *utterly human curiosity*. Language, or more explicitly the act of composing a question—which in itself is a philosophical activity—is the imposition of intellectual or logical architecture—a framework of sorts—on that rather unprecise and fluctuating curiosity. Language is the articulation of such . . . and *as such*. . . . Now this *curiosity*—generally speaking, the desire to investigate, to gratify with knowledge or information—is made palpable, *palatable*, or manifest, by the act of transforming it into a question or linguistic entity—albeit one whose genealogy begins at *desire*. . . . Now,” I continued in decisive tones, “we have a question. And ipso facto are once removed from reality. One form of life—the question or linguistic entity—representing, surrogating, another. That other being *desire*.”

“Are you somehow saying that philosophy is *anti-life*?”

“Not exactly. Rather would I say it is a retreat from life. A sort of bracketing of life.”

The Wet Motorcycle

“Well then, is Descartes’ *Meditations* a work of art . . . *is it poetry or philosophy? And if it is a work of art, then what’s the difference between poetry and philosophy?*”

“Both art and philosophy are alternative forms of life. And both are reflections of man’s estimation of himself. Or else: Consider Poe’s *Eureka*, is it a metaphysical treatise, or is it *but* a poem in prose? Consider Lucretius, *On Nature*, is it a treatise on Epicurean physics and ethics, or is it poetry? I think what matters in the long run are the ends to which the work is put. Consider the political efficaciousness of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. And Thomas Szasz. . . . Consider Karl Marx. Consider the Sermon on the Mount, is it a speech on religious instruction, is it a political manifesto, is it a poem? Both art and philosophy are reflections of man’s estimation of himself. That is indisputable. Then again, in all philosophies there is an element of wishful thinking. . . .”

Her eyes were lowered. Had I, somehow, with my taut impromptu lecture, been abusive? Her fecundity had fled. I had hit a vulnerability.

We had ’til then divulged so little of ourselves.

“Lydia,” I began, somewhat awkwardly pressing my palm to my heart, “I ought to tell you now, *I am involved with someone else. . . .*”

And indeed, prior to Lydia’s touch I had believed myself to be in love. *But she had made illusion of all that.*

“And she’s a student at our school,” I continued. “But I know that I want you, now,” I told. “I know that with you—”

“And with you I, too, know something special,” she told taking my palm in her hand.

“But I must not hurt this other,” I told.

“You could have left last night. You had your coat on. You were about to leave. *Why didn’t you?*”

“You know I couldn’t leave.”

“And I did not wish for you to leave.”

“This other, she studies pharmacology. Right now she’s at home with her parents. I’m supposed to be with her tomorrow evening. But I don’t want to. I want to be with you. I feel so wonderful with you. *Do you feel it? Tell me what you’re feeling—*”

“Yes. I will.”

And she kissed my palm. . . .

The Wet Motorcycle

“I know what’s happened,” she began. “Listen and I’ll tell you. I’ve come across it so often in my readings, and I’ve always been in wonder by its legends. It’s so rare, and so often talked about but in its genuine form so rare. You see, you and I, together, are special,” she told. “It’s called *affinity*. *It’s an affinity, the attraction we share. . . .*”

She paused to wipe her lips. There was rouge on her napkin. That characteristic manner was returned in full expression.

“Plato contains a recountal,” she continued, “wherein Socrates hears telling of a theory by which lovers are in search of their complementary others—”

“Yes. *The Symposium*.”

“Yes. And you know of Paracelsus’ use of the principle of *like to like*, which is a doctrine derived in part from the alchemical identification of planetary spheres with metals. The belief in an affinity existing between a certain metal and a certain planet, for example *iron* shares an affinity with *Mars*. Well it came to be theorized that affinities exist within human beings as part of our general constitutions, and these affinities connect us, in an essential way, to the cosmos. In each one of us our affinities are distinct. They are distinct in two ways: such as how our fingerprints are distinct, and then, but most importantly, they are distinct in the manner by which they correspond to the cosmos. If you could literally see my affinities, you would see a cosmic pattern that is *Lydia in connection to the cosmos*. Each one of us is thus equipped to complement—that is, *to make complete*, in a sense—a corresponding pattern of affinities existing within another human being. *This accounts for the feeling we share*. The odds were astronomical—*and against us!*—that we should ever have met.”

“I want to be with you always, now. I want to learn and grow beside you. But again, I must not hurt this other girl. She has been kind and generous to me, and while I now understand that I have never been in love with her, *still. . . .* We have experienced so much together . . . we have always been there to console and encourage each other. I am her only intimate friend . . . *indeed I am her only friend*. She is solitary and delicate. And she is troubled, emotionally. *She has come to depend upon my promise.*”

“Do you have any classes together?”

“No. *None. . . .* In fact lately we’ve both been so busy preparing for exams tomorrow evening would be our first get-together in weeks. I have to be there. *You understand? I have to—*”

The Wet Motorcycle

“You know where I’ll be—”

“Yes.”

“I’ll be waiting for you—”

“Yes.”

“I’ll be wanting you.”

“Yes.”

Exams passed. So compressed was I—to see *Lydia, she for whom I be alive!* No exam, no duty dare dilute my fervor. So charged, finely tuned was I body and mind. Acute—my virtues, my powers of apprehension. I would seize upon all puzzle of logic, therapeutically scanning my text—and *not without a certain indignation for where once I was given to pause.* Acute too, my associative virtues. For while the idea of Lydia so filled my time so too did the ideas of philosophy come together, meld, and synthesize for me into new and advantageous comprehensions. And yet, alas, my reader, you for whom I leave this text, an utmost quandary was born. For a qualitatively greater apprehension admits a greater cross withal its greater joy.

Christmas week. And all about us—what seem to hover, as though hesitant, sparkling diamond point, trailing varied color as they catch the light—the immaculate symmetry of snowflakes. The city thus caught withdrew, and in its place, *a town.* Taxi’s whir was wrapped, its tracks vanishing wakes.

A theory, recorded long before, how certain snow, lighting, makes friction in the air, *and warmth—*

“A child’s theory,” she esteemed. “But is it so?”

“Does not this night’s air welcome us, our open coats? Yet see, what’s in our hair stays its perfect crystal.”

“I want to see this city halted under snow!”

“The sound of chains on snowplows!”

We shared flavored brandy via flask. Her warm, sweet and supple lips.

“The snow is ending,” she said, turning from my arms. “And now the sky will clear and open up, and maybe, maybe we’ll see sgtars. *Stars make a miracle of snow.*”

The Wet Motorcycle

“I do not know too many stars,” I said, coming to her side. “Skyscrapers. *Skyscrapers and scattered light—*”

“I want to show you stars. I want to teach you how to trace the constellations. You’ll see—*I’ll give you stars. . . .*”

She took my hands and held me close.

“That’ll be my gift for you. . . .”

Morning had Lydia northwards for the Berkshires, to her home for Christmas gathering. I too would return home for the holiday.

I arrived, late afternoon. No one was home. I was resting in the kitchen, listening for that old-house timbre, creaks and knocks, the forever settling in—a twittering, *it might be on the fritz*, the freezer’s motor kicking in. In an alcove of the kitchen stands a cedar hutch, here mother stores her preserves. *This fruit, so brown and often tart.* Though mother would distribute fair amounts of her fruit, hers could not compare with our neighbors’—theirs being soft, sweet candy, and hers stubbornly chewy and tart. She has never won awards for her preserves. One summer she decreed to let the squirrels have the fruit—*to hell with the awards.* And here’s her favorite photograph, it is brother in his football uniform. And here’s her antique piggy bank, it is filled with Indian-head pennies. Here are her cookbooks. And here are her books. *The Country Wife. The Colossus. The Outermost House.* A folded, years-old Audubon datebook. Each turn presents anew a goose or common loon, a shoveler duck, a ruddy duck—

Trees stiffen into place like burnt nerves.

Recollections do.

I made for my room. I prepared a chore of laundry. I drew the covers to my chin.

I must have slept, for next I knew was mother there talking me awake—

What time did you get in? Did you eat? Did your brother call? What time is Linda coming?

“What’s up with the freezer, making strange noises?”

“Oh, that. *Your father thinks my parakeet’s returned.*”

“Chuckles has returned to haunt the freezer?”

The Wet Motorcycle

“I guess it’s on the fritz. What time is Linda coming?”

She is gathering my laundry to her chest—

“I was gonna do that—”

“You can put them in the dryer. Did you shower?”

“Is it snowing?”

“It stopped.”

Die Postkarte.

She sent a postcard. *Der Seefahrer*. Mother left it on my desk. Postdated the third, *come at four to this address*, it began. *Possibly good lecture we’ll attend and miss you much*, it closed.

I conjectured the address her employment place. Though but once was it mentioned and at that a passing slight, Lydia told herself a governess of sort. I thought, *how little is surely known of her*. It was I who waxed autographical, and at this she heard attentively, nodding asmile for some description or fact as recognizing points in common, *points of affinity*. These points regarded taste, aesthetic sensibility—though not as pertains to food and dress but to beauty and psychology.

City bound, aboard the train, I read again her postcard. I made a bookmark of it.

Fit and starting, rocking car—the forms of houses, stores and trees as passed was hypnotizing. Was ceased long fore to midtown, a dry, swift flurry.

Twenty of four as at First at Forty-one aboard a bus for uptown, I.

Weather-ridden townhouse. Wrought steel knocker to slam. Meed enough, Lydia’s greeting.

“Of course I’d come,” I said.

“I missed your smell,” says she hiding her face inside my coat. “Your nose is cold. I like it. *Look! For us!*”

Champagne!

I followed a long corridor, down stairs to where her chore was yet unfinished.

The Wet Motorcycle

“I just have to pull from the dryer,” she said. “But first—a *toast! To us!*”
She kneeled before the dryer. I kneeled at her side.

“These are their clothes?”

“Yep. *These are their clothes all right.*”

“We may find this city halted under snow, tonight.”

“And the lecture’s in *The Bronx. The Rose Hill campus.*”

“They sure have a lot of underwear.”

“*Don’t they?* It makes me sick.”

“So what’s he like, *the man of the house?*”

She raised her head, thinking through a wry expression.

“He’s a boy. *A big boy.* Emotionally he’s exactly where you’d expect a banker’s lawyer to be. Damn lacking the slightest trace of empathy. *Like a landlord. See these?*”

She held up a pair of white boxers.

“Not the slightest trace of a stain. First trace of a stain and he throws them out. *But see these?*”

And now she held a pair of panties.

“See the holes?”

Indeed, *they may very well be replaced*, I thought.

“Himself,” she continued, “he likes spotless. But he likes *these—*” as she held the garment so, tilting it so, “he likes *these* on his wife. For with *these* upon her hips she appears to him to be *whorish, low*. That’s his idea of female sexuality. For in that *normal little psychology of his*, sex is *dirty, unforgivable. Just look at all this underwear!*”

Then occurred another voice, behind us. At once I thought it the woman of the house.

“I’m Lydia’s roommate.”

She reached her hand for mine. She had gathered to her chest her laundry, which she next placed atop the washer.

“Sifting through their laundry?” she observed. “Telling factors, therein that laundry pile. I myself prefer a well-worn bra and pantie, but this—” as she reached for her pile, at which point Lydia intervened, chose a garment from that for her and brought it to her hand, “but this—” as she spun the garment round, “this pertains I assure you to my poverty, and not my psychosexual disposition.”

She turned her eyes toward Lydia.

The Wet Motorcycle

“Whereas Lydia, here,” she continued, and at this my Lydia smiled, “of course forgoes the expenditure entirely.”

And with this the garment, still spinning ’round, was propelled back onto the pile. Whereupon my Lydia rose and unbuttoned her jeans, extolling her broad blond pubis.

We then made for the lengths of three dark stair, the last of which was spiral and uncurled unto a narrow corridor. Upon some scattered rugs we convened.

The roommate asked if I had ever believed in ghosts. I suggested *Turn of the Screw*.

“That’s not what I want to know,” she persisted.

“But I don’t study the occult.”

“Well, *then I could be a ghost. And you wouldn’t know from Adam!*”

It was then did I notice her pallor, only not a pallor as such, but her face be-pattered with actor’s makeup!

“Granted you are enigma,” I told. “All beauty’s enigma to me. You are an actor?”

“Artiste!” she told. “I do not act. *I simply am.*”

“Well I can appreciate that. *Artaud?*”

“*Artaud*. Lydia says you are a poet.”

“Recite like you do for me,” bid Lydia then. “Brief ones, at least.”

“New moon, learn the hearted sky. Stars—eyes of God—too seek vision of Heaven.”

And now the roommate sang my verse, but with expression such as I could not achieve. In response I uttered . . . not a word . . . for I knew no word to relate my impression, but a sound . . . *a tone of voice*.

“You’ve another” she posed. “Will you let me in on it?”

How susceptible I fell. I had no choice.

“How might a wish unuttered its author receive? Methinks in certain ways. Inwardly expressed, all is kept unfore. I close my lips and utter a boldest vocable.”

Again she sang my verse—*with expression such as I could not achieve!*

Lydia was reclining, her arms around my waist. The roommate came close and gave a kiss upon my lips. She sipped of my champagne. Then she was gone, and returned with a clay pipe.

The Wet Motorcycle

Is your mouth dry? Yes, it's the air in here. What's up with the air in here? It tastes like a museum. Only in this museum the fixtures eat. . . . The stuff of which the decor about us was built seemed of age one hundred years. This campus dates back to 1841. It's said the ghost of Poe haunts the library. Early in 1849 he had a vision there. Virginia came to him and she forgave him. He then began the process of converting to Catholicism. Right at that church out there, through that courtyard. But he abandoned the idea. We shouldn't be here. That is exactly why we are here. These are Jesuits! It's just the air, I think it's rarefied or something. I need water. Relax, they'll think we're someone's relatives. You know, I read somewhere how priests used to be mystics. A company of elder Jesuits appeared and took their places at the dais. Someone's getting an award. Commemoration. Then someone will expound a metaphysics. My God! Hush! What's up? I don't believe who's here. I swear it's downright tribal. Will you lower your voice, where. . . . Wait, he's coming toward us, don't turn. . . . he's seating himself behind us. Oh boy, you're really doing it, who is he? He saw me! He looked right at me and didn't even smile. . . . or flinch. . . . he ignored me. Lower your voice. It's that instructor I told you about, the one who's always drunk, the one who needs a beer before class. She pretended adjusting her coat so as to turn to notice him. He looks more like a goatherd than a philosopher. But what guile his disguise! Let's sit with him, he's all alone. No way, the man can't stand me. Well you're very assertive and you always know the work, you're a prodigy, and he's just making a living. He's drunk. . . . take a closer look. Herder's Kant he's not. . . .

City bound, aboard the train, I read again her postcard. The ride, rather disquieting it was. My belly, growling so. I sat staring for the window opposite. Up to the moment when her reflection became apparent, I sat as though alone. . . .

“I think I understand the Father's metaphysics,” she began, at last. “It is *moralistic*, finally. *No?*”

“*Moralistic edification*. But is that not his calling?”

“The moral interpretation—”

“The ordering of a seemingly disordered and tyrannical nature. Yet is it not in itself a tyranny? A tyranny against nature? A tyranny inflicted on this indomitable nature?”

The Wet Motorcycle

“Indomitable?”

“Unquenchable. . . .”

“What is it nature thirsts after?”

“Dominance. Influence. Power.”

She reached forward to a seat opposite and took up a discarded newspaper.

CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE SOUGHT AMERICAN COMMONWEALTH INEVITABLE?

Converge . . . forces do, I thought.

“You see,” she began with gloved finger to the headline, “forces converge—
if only to draw new strength from one another.”

“Mexico is ravaged,” I said. “Mexico. Cuba. Panama. *Southern California.*”

I sat, car sick, staring through the window opposite. The silhouettes of houses, stores and trees as passed were hypnotizing. She loosened my scarf and held me close.

“We’ll get you something to eat,” she whispered.

I closed my eyes. . . .

Extant a germ of tension, to that tenement, we. Lydia’s hands, a fumbling with the key.

“It’s empty!” I remarked. “*The place is empty!* Where’s all your stuff?”

“All that stuff wasn’t mine,” she said, now making way for the kitchen.

I noticed a mattress—*the* mattress—remained.

“The freezer’s empty,” she said. “I’ll go out for some *Chinese*. I’ll explain when I get back.”

“At least it’s warm. *What’s up?*”

“*I’ll explain when I get back.* Don’t answer the phone.”

“*What phone?*”

The place seemed to have been vacated. But sure enough there remained a phone, and some books were gathered—*thrown?*—upon the mattress. . . . I made my way for the freezer. *Are you with me, bird?*

The Wet Motorcycle

I remembered there had been an ivy on the sill. *Hedera Helix*. The Irish Lace. *Hedera Helix*, I recalled from botany. Botany class with Linda. *Sharing notes and crib with Linda*. . . . *Chemurgic formulae*, she words. *Provincial remedials*. *Ameliorates*. These words drip off her lips like candy . . . *poison, candy*. . . . Then through that kitchen window, above the street below, I spy my Lydia, making a call. . . .

I moved from the window. I let my body keel onto the mattress. I drew my coat to my chin. . . .

That evening passed. We didn't speak. Side by side we lay, withdrawn into our helplessnesses.

"Why such pessimistic air?" she asks. "Our affinity is obvious!"

Her lips came close to mine.

"Pessimistic?" I asked. "Or clairvoyant!"

Vide I. No place to be. Southwards, I, on First as Lydia taxis north. I turn to see again . . . she is traffic. At Forty-two, I am westward. GCT.

"If you hurry," she says, slurring, "you can catch the ten-o'clock."

"But Linda," I moan.

We were standing at her door. She would not invite me in.

"I need to see you."

"So? You can see. Fulfill your need and go. *It's more than you deserve.*"

"Things happen. People do things."

She was rolling her eyes.

"What's *that* mean?" I moan.

"What do *you* mean?" she sallied. "What. *What does your being here mean?*"

But then I altered my tone, from one of pathos to the clinic, applying the tactic whereby a change of tone initiates a change of tenor.

"How're you doing?" I asked.

"Oh boy," she receded, rolling her eyes. "You really don't get it, do you?"

The Wet Motorcycle

“I get it! I get it or I wouldn’t be here!”

“No. You don’t get anything. You have no right to ask me how I’m doing. And no one invited you here.”

“I can suffer all your nonsense, but you can’t suffer mine?”

“You abandoned me, pal. I opened my eyes and you were gone. *What happened? Did I scare you away?*”

And what did she expect I would answer? *Yes! Yes! You frightened me off?*

“Did I scare you away?” she asked.

And there it was. It pushed me into numbness.

“You know,” she began, “you would have stayed to help a friend. A friend would’ve helped a friend. And I wasn’t just your friend, I was your pal. And I loved you. Did you really think I’d go through with it?”

She was sobbing now, and deeply.

“This is what I am!” she cried, choking on her words.

“No Linda! I don’t believe that. *This is what you’ve become!*”

And oh, did she not know the degree to which I’d come to share her suffering? The degree to which she had convinced me of my own suppressed pain? And disillusioned me? And disheartened me?

“Why don’t you get a coat,” I said. “Or here, take mine—”

“No. You keep it on. You look terrible.... Where’d you sleep last night, on a cardboard box?”

“I couldn’t sleep.”

“Wondering if I was gonna kill myself?”

“No. Wondering if you were gonna *find* yourself.”

“Disappointed?”

“I’m getting impatient.”

And now at last she allowed me to her eyes. She didn’t turn away.

“I’m sorry,” she began.

“What for? I don’t want an apology—”

“*I lost it.* I let it go. I don’t love you any more.”

I know my face was cringing. My whole body was contorting. *It had to be showing on my face.* I had lost it too, but I was unable to tell her. I knew our relationship was over—it was toxic, *poisoned*. But I was unable to say. Anyhow, it didn’t matter who said it, so it might just as well be her. She could use a little heroism.

The Wet Motorcycle

“There are things I’ll always love about you,” she said.

I couldn’t talk any more. She came forward and kissed my lips. She stayed close for a while and there was passion in her way. And despite it all, I was feeling aroused. And despite it all, I wanted to make love. I even wondered if anyone was home inside, and if she wanted to make love to me.

I opened my coat and pulled her close for my warmth. I tried to embrace her—

“You can love me this way?” she said pulling back.

Her face seemed so small, and so wrung with confusion. But what remained was the impression of her body, how thin and, oh, how unwell it was. I reached for her wrist. It was thin like a child’s wrist. She pulled it away from me.

“You’re sick too! You’re no good for me!” she cried.

I was thinking all sorts of things, but I was unable to say them. I didn’t want to leave. I couldn’t make a decision. Her mother came to the door. My eyes started burning.

“Can I drive you to the station?” the woman asked.

“I don’t understand,” I said. I was sobbing. “I don’t understand this,” I said.

“We don’t understand it either,” she said.

I was sobbing pretty deeply. I sort of shrugged. Linda was gone into the house by now. I think I heard her crying.

“Ho boy,” I said. “I don’t know.”

“We don’t know either.”

I turned and started on my way. I stopped at the edge of their lawn and put my hands into my pockets. Her mother was still watching me. I don’t know how long I stood there, watching her and she watching me. . . .

I don’t know why I boarded the north-bound train except that it was there and I was cold. For some reason, maybe instinct, I can’t say, my legs were moving on their own, I made my way into the last car. Maybe I was fleeing the diesel smoke. I was standing at the door, staring down onto the ties, counting the ties as they slipped away from under us . . . *so many of us, so many of us*. . . . The snow was swept up and blown ’round in our wake . . . swept up and blown ’round in a vortex . . . *so many of us, so many of us* I had no destination. Station after station after station going by. I was hypnotized. My will to judgment was gone. I was

The Wet Motorcycle

lulled by the rocking movement of the car, swept up and 'round and released, slipping away and out from under us, swept up and 'round and released, slipping away and out from under us, swept up and 'round and released. We were traveling a while, now, and I still hadn't seen a conductor. I pulled open the door, holding fast to the handle, my hair was whipped into my eyes. My neck was wet. And I was trembling. But the air, the cold, dry air. Then there, swept up and blown 'round over the ties, but keeping up with us. Down there, swept up and blowing 'round over the ties, still it kept up with us. What was it, tumbling, swirling in our wake, hurrying along behind us. What was it . . . captured in our wake, caught up in the swirling after-us. *Ho!* It is rising . . . 'round and 'round, 'round and 'round. *Ho! Ho!* As though it had a will of its own, the object swooped into the car and lit against my legs, flapping in the draft. *Why, 'tis someone's bill! Ho! With an announcement!* The Blackwoods Welcome You To Restful Pine Knoll Farm. *The Blackwoods Welcome You To Restful Pine Knoll Farm. . . .*

Soon, before the early sundown, I was arrived at Pine Knoll Farm.

Greeted by a genteel miss, soon was I to learn it is not she who keeps the inn.

"Lorelei," says she raising a finger to her lips. "Quiet. *Verily so.*"

"Fraulein," says I, dipping my head.

"Mrs. Blackwood," came another, with hand reaching for mine. "You're in time for dinner. I can bring it up if you wish."

Frau Blackwood has returned with a tray.

"Or would you prefer it on your lap?"

Tireless I lay, rusticated I. Then icon trailing after icon. Thought or feeling, rush the fore, then fled less all resolve. With all seeming to linger, and all seeming beyond, *if I but catch you, one, I say, I'll snuff you out but good!*

By early light I see my tidy bide.

Bergstock. And booties!

The Wet Motorcycle

Just outside my window, bands, ribbons, stripes through azure sky, barn swallows, none too tame a darting, dive.

Sitting up from my warm pillow, tips of reaching pine rise tall above my sill. Lost, lost amid that handsome pine, my step lets new impressing. Bitter pine leaf echo a welcoming. Bitter cone, I pause to hear the state of heart whose tear I cannot conceal.

Brethren cone.

Then something not expertly known attracts me. Approaches, I—*the bowman*—to explore.

Red rose. Collared in a snow-white, *Rose.* . . .

But what arresting wisdom cautions with a halt. Terrorizing, too.

Cruel trick, some niggard spirit placed it here.

Plastic rose.

Frau Blackwood, then, a breakfast setting. She graced my plate with muffins and berries, my cup with steaming coffee.

“I can pack a box for you. You’ll be hungry out there.”

Her cup is full.

“My mind was not with Lydia exclusively, Linda entered daily to arrest my occupation. A thought of her invariably effected reflective pause. I, yet, reflected not to Linda, but to functions revealed her so keenly in my thoughts and feelings. For regardless of to what extent a physical break existed, I knew myself emotionally and imaginatively yet adhered to her.”

I am paused for of some muffin.

“Bon appetit.”

“Merci. Parlez vous français?”

“No, no, it’s been too long—”

“Your husband?”

“Not any more, I’m afraid, but my daughter does. She’ll be home this morning. Did you study French?”

“This is delicious. The swallows are beautiful.”

“The swallows live in the barns. They nest in the rafters. Don’t be surprised if they follow you into the woods. They think you have food for them. And don’t be alarmed if they swoop over your head. They’ll keep their distance.”

The Wet Motorcycle

“This is delicious.”

“Help yourself. You’re welcome to bring some along with you. All the young men and women go for walks in the woods. There’s a walking stick in your room. Take it with you.”

“Thank you. Thank you for everything. Where was I? So, thereupon my object, since I could not banish all relevant stimuli—potential reminders, that is—was, rather, to mind the processes by virtue of which the thought of Linda recurred. That I might control its affects, of course. I soberly pursued this practice. Leastwise for the distraction it produced. Along these lines I would endeavor: What we own of reality is nothing save the ideas we have managed to form about it. Sentiments are embellishments with which we augment these ideas. I would adjust reflection so as to avoid augmenting the idea—*not to augment with sentiments which are as embellishments becleaved to the bland idea!* I would, rather eclectically, invoke a system on demand.”

I paused for of some coffee.

“This is Columbian?” I say.

“No. It is African.”

“Delicious.”

“My daughter’s choice—”

“Oh?”

“Yes, my daughter’s—”

“Delicious.”

“Thank you. Help yourself.”

“Thank you. Where was I?”

“Ideas—”

“Yes. *My conversion.* Those sentiments—*they were the culprit!* Promptly I deemed them invalid. It is in this sense,” I concluded, raising my brow as I so often do, “*it is in this sense* that persons who’ve once been in contact with each other continue to act upon each other at a distance, after the physical contact has been severed.”

Climbing the stair, I then paused and turned to Frau Blackwood. She was clearing the table.

“Mrs. Blackwood?”

The Wet Motorcycle

I wanted just to see her face.

“I’ll pack a box for you,” she said.

Back inside my room I stood before the open window. My view was of gray stables and old, nearly dilapidated ruddy barns. On the roofs the snow was glistening and melting, and just beneath the roofs, darting from the eaves, the magic swallows appeared. Beyond this, I saw cleared tracts of land where I could make out symmetrical furrows, on some parts the sun shone so brilliantly I was made to turn away. When I looked again, it was beyond this and out to the distance, to what appeared to be a fortress wall of dark and serried pine. This fortress wall was so far off, at times it seemed a surge of dark lake water.

I heard voices down below, one the voice of someone new. It was Frau Blackwood’s daughter.

“Does he ride?” the daughter asked—as at last both mother and daughter appeared into the sunlight, and continued for the stables.

And although I do not observe an entirety, a prominent cheek and wheat-blond hair are striking, and for the instant I perceive my Lydia. Seconds later, saddleless and clutching the mane, this other gaits out and is headed for the woods. But how she seemed of a different universe than I—of a different social element, certainly. I thought to know that face entirely, but no. . . . That moment I resolved to abandon the farm. I was overcome with longing—and panic. *To breathe again the atmosphere of Lydia.*

I called for a car. When it arrived I hurried into it. The driver shifted gear. Frau Blackwood appeared drawing for my open window.

“I packed a box for you!”

She reached into the car and dropped it on my lap. I watched her face as the car took me away. She was nodding, *Yes. . . .*

Tremulous agitation . . . impound my belly so. These lips . . . parched and cracking each I speak. Southward . . . aboard that train . . . my illness peaked . . . my belly convulsed. There, within that compartment, and for first it seemed in centuries, *I stupefied myself with prayer. But oh, obscure emotion. What onslaught of image these hours gave to fore.* I saw, again, and again but in part,

The Wet Motorcycle

how everywhere, how everything came sufficient for the association. I saw, again, Frau Blackwood's daughter, and unto partial image construed entire face, entire personage . . . my Lydia. . . . *To ride with her a gallop . . . arms about her waist . . . ride for serried mountain pines ahead. . . . So eager is the burst, but for instants do I sense a hoof impact the earth . . . and yet it was of this earth, did I see. . . . How then within that archa' pine shafts of sun stand sheer saints drawn in space through which our gait, then quick, delay. No word but our breathing as is heard the horse's cant for air. . . . Mossy slope . . . huge mossy boulder during which I fear the hoofstep slide of sudden, no. Her fix to mane abandoned, her hands clasp over mine. Come to open space and stream. All trees felled and cleared save for stumps. Stream narrow . . . thicken . . . wide. Stream gone, gone hidden into earth. My maenad dismounts. . . . A maenad she's become, a frenzy, grotesque, and beautiful, with thyrsus and illumined belly. . . .*

Phoebus. *After-cloud!* Ruly bode.

Je suis impure.

I am deceased!

J'habite immobile cette épine délicieux.

*New York City
1986-2008-2018*

The Wet Motorcycle

Stephen's Lake (a novel in parts)

"Der Fall Stephen"

Route 27 stretches E. and W. Along its southern wayside lies a waste of sandy lot jostled through with Queen Anne's Lace. A tall wrought-iron railing marks a boundary for the Lutheran cemetery which keeps to the road for a quarter mile. The morning traffic comes and goes infrequently then towards noon the road is packed with vehicles. When the weather is fair and the sand is heavy, the earthwarmed air reflects the sky so as to be a rippling silver ocean. This causes the vehicles to pause. The drivers exit their cabs, raise a palm to their foreheads and wonder how real it is, then drive on into it. In the cemetery the stones are mossed and forgotten. The rails are chapped and peeling. Beyond the farthest boundary is a schoolhouse. Through its tall trim windows begabed with broken pediments a class of kindergartners is joining a circle to play an exercise. One child is refusing to join in. The teacher is scolding him. She cites his failed attempts at penmanship. She leads him to a chair beside a window.

"Stephen's Idyll"

The boy, let out to the garden, stood in a puddle left by the rainfall. He looked down to his feet and there he found his reflection gazing up at him. And then he saw the sun's reflection shimmering there beside his own. He raised his eyes and with his palm above his brow he studied the yellow disc as it was amid the great blue space. His skin was warmed. He closed his eyes and placed his palm atop his head feeling the warmth absorbed by his hair. Now a breeze traveled by thick with

The Wet Motorcycle

the various spices of the garden Never before had he the pleasure of enjoying the aromas so freely Sensing them so made him sigh and he opened his eyes For a moment he thought he would see the aromas and imagined them a likeness to the rainbow The ground was puddly From puddle to puddle he went, standing in each, and seeing in each reflection the sun shimmering beside his image

One

His first sleep was broken with adolescent voice—rise, rise from below the open window, fill the sleepy ear, elicit in that memory your image. It was her child's voice.

A still sunlight shone velvety the bare wood wall, rosewood bureau, cane chair upon which lay his glasses.

Among so many books amassed unconsciously, thin threads, netting dust, suspended illumined.

A dulcet splash elicited an image—*a shallow, petalstrewn pool.*

He rose before the open window. He found her eyes awaiting his . . . she lowered hers. . . .

He considered himself, standing naked before the open window—*how much of my body was she able to perceive?*

He let his fingers through his hair, let his smooth palm over the curvature of his abdomen, let his narrow fingers through the thicket above his pubis.

Two

Taking up her file, the mother turned for another room. She placed a tape of de Hartmann into play and reclining began fashioning her fingernails—so capably, as but a life of habit could achieve. Now de Hartmann played, a hesitant, evolving resolution, fit to entrance and deliver, delight the body into serial movements. She heard his footsteps, the creaking of the floorboards above.

—Stephen?

The Wet Motorcycle

He loved her this way, as she gestures with her file, or, more concertedly, with her eyes.

He let a fingertip to beneath her eye and gently palmed her nape, and as he held her forward she parted her thighs and held him to her breast.

She saw, beyond his boyish countenance, an inner strength which had yet to be exerted. She saw other men, but only bodies—no voices, no personalities. She saw her ailing mother, and father long passed on. She saw her child—that gorgeous face, flaming hair given to the wind.

He held his head upon her breast, the chiffon cool to his warm face. He kissed above her heart, the scent of her perfume. He brought his palm to just above her breast. He kissed her chin. He kissed beside her mouth. She kissed his forehead. She touched her lips to his mouth and pressed his head to her breast.

—And I know you, Stephen, she whispered. I've known you all my life.

Three

Inside the water a yellow disc fell calm amid blue space. Restless, in the encircling pine, cicadae sang. She found herself surrounded, within a giant crown, was tipped by reaching pine asway like angel wing. Has he placed amiss his crown, him off to bathe in yon brown lake? But see, he returns!

She stared into the pool.

The petals became still again.

Four

Alone to muse, a canvas chaise beside the shallow, petalstrewn pool, his tablet at lap, a pen at hand, Stephen lay.

A note for someone far?

Or:

Has the wind reversed its course?

The Wet Motorcycle

*And after loving, we say nothing.
Only our sounds, the bodies relaxing.
There is no sign of affection.*

He scrutinized the broad pine trees—sketching them in his mind, he seduced them into feathers, poplar, transparency, but for other pine, farther on.
He cringed in servility to his ideal.

Five

The Italian sports car, its brake engaged, slid some inches on the driveway gravel before halting in its place beneath the portecochere. Reaching to the cupboard's upmost shelf, the girl withdrew glass tumblers. Clouds were gathering, wisps of glistening cirrus halted high above like monitors, sensing no resistance, they summoned their brothers, the cumulus, they arrived, arrived, increasing their number, then seemingly cumbersome they hovered, waiting, pondered a bumbling.

Six

Yet unspoken, yet unseen, the girl stole notice of his features.

The wavy hair.

The delicately shaped ear.

The golden rim to his glasses.

Seeing sidewise through his lens observed how all appeared oblongish, oblique.

—There's a lake.

—Where?

—Beyond the garden.

—Beyond the pine?

—There's a boathouse.

At their feet, traces of a path, slabs of slate long fractured into bits.

The Wet Motorcycle

The lakeside seemed skirted in fur.

The girl reached her arms as though to take the lake with an embrace—its entire circumference fit within her reach.

He thought that she, perhaps, wished to take him in her arms.

—Over there! A landing!

It was of wood, ocher and parched, stepping onto it, it swayed, dipping an edge, then it rose of its own buoyancy. Then submerged at its side, save for a tip of bow, a rowboat, its oars locked yet in their oarlocks.

—This morning I heard you singing outside my window. Actually I'd been awakened for some time, I could not sleep beyond my dreams. Hearing your voice I could not help but to see you again as you were last autumn in Italy. . . . I'd only completed my chore when I left the rooms for some sunshine before lunch. I'd only begun to near that terrible fountain when I realized it did not seem as turbulent and booming as I had found it to be the day before. Hardly so, this time I found it to be whispering. Whispering inwardly. Yet I felt welcomed, approaching this intimacy. Then I discern, above the spray, a tender voice singing fragments of a melody. How familiar this melody seemed! I began slowly toward it and I recognized it was yours. . . . You were sitting close to the spray. Your hair was awreathe in the mist. I sat a short distance behind you, and I listened, and I watched. . . .

The lake reflected nothing.

The landing throbbed imparting cadence to the lake.

Her voice began once more that simple melody, as Stephen saw her clothing fall away, how she with celebration disappeared into the lake.

Seven

Candles burned, dripping in their sconce. The flames glared across a photograph.

—Father.

He, with pointer, stands before a class of children.

She touched the frame, leaving it aslant.

—Father.

Her portfolio.

The Wet Motorcycle

Interiors with covered fixtures.

Sea views.

Portraits.

A charcoal nude.

—Stephen!

—I've been feeling tremors.

—When I hold you I am solacing a child, a child who sculpts his thoughts into beauty, yet so pliant are these thoughts, he cannot be done with them.

Eight

A jet of damp air passed. Before the open window, he knew the maple floorboards ret with rain.

*Yet so pliant are these thoughts,
he cannot be done with them.*

Soon the woman's voicing ceased.

Flutter!

Splash!

He traced it to above the dark, depthless pool where his ears took a bobbing at the surface, his eyes movements of silhouettes dipping and ascending.

—Forgive me, Stephen.

Her eyes followed the contour and pulsation of his naked silhouette.

Nine

He thought he perceived about her a phosphorescing as he reached his hand to touch her shoulder. He felt his hand reached through her, or did not reach her at all.

—The tremors!

The Wet Motorcycle

—We are high up! The mountain's peak!

She leaned aside her head and slow, with lifting arms, began a low continuous drone. Teetering at pool's edge, exhaling and rebreathing her own vaporized breath, she whirred, whirled.

He jutted for her.

From within the black, steeped pine, silhouettes dipped after him.

—The tremors!

Leave me!

With fingertips he cleared her face of hair and kissed her forehead.

Leave me!

Ten

He drew the blanket to his chin, opening his eyes to realize not the blanket, but the woman's robe, instead.

—Stephen!

With cupped hand she skimmed the petaled surface.

—Stephen!

Ripples on the water let it seem in motion—a black seam, the length of the pool!

A fissure?

—It's a fissure!

The tremors!

—I suppose.

The Wet Motorcycle

With cupped hand he skimmed the petaled surface. Submerged, he heard the woman utter. Indecipherable. To the fracture he reached. He fit his fingers into it.

A siphon!

Eleven

To his lips he held a bit of pear, but could not savor.

The pool has emptied!

Twelve

About them midday played its sheer luxury. The woman recited couplets. She carved apples and pears.

—Stephen?

His face—at once it countenanced haughtiness and strength, the bearer of obsidian.

The woman recited couplets. She carved apples and pears.

Coda

At their feet, traces of a path, slabs of slate long fractured into bits. Carpeted, then, by bristle leaf, dusty cone, pressed by days, the lakeside seemed skirted in fur. And how her hair kept its brilliant *red*, despite cumulative clouds, mining the sunlight. The lake the color of the pine tar. The landing, that of the trunks. And as he aimed his eye for what awaited them, she took him with an embrace. He saw into her eyes to welcome what he knew would be her first confiding. She threw

The Wet Motorcycle

back her hair, eyes pitched at gray zenith, a tear streaking her temple. He kissed her neck and felt his cheek toward her tear, it was warm and soft and inside him. The lake reflected nothing. The landing throbbed, imparting cadence to the lake. She passed into that subtle surface, where they kissed, eyes pressing closed, as the water swirled and eddied, as dim circularities arose beneath to pillow their embrace letting fathom after fathom pass as the lake rose from its basin, rose above its shore, above the reaching pine to where it hovered among clouds. A warm, sunny twilight filled the basin. Clasp hands, both gathered into ken inhabitants long drawn from an initial berth. Wrecked oars. Gone tools. Gnarl and clenching bough once gasping for air. Now petrified trunk. Now petrified limb stump. The water swirled and eddied, thrusting them afloat. Rain burst down upon them. They held, treading, seeing all in wiling disarray

Marginalia

It was her child's voice.

Follow concert nature. With all swan's grace the voice then dove head first. A shallow, petalstrewn pool. The dulcet splash elicited an image. . . .

They were attracted, held fast, she lowered hers.

She rose from the pool, reclined towelless beneath upon the warm concrete poolside. She closed her eyes. . . .

He dressed into madras trunks, a worn black polo shirt

Now she knew her happiness, sorely won although it be. August vacationer, and Stephen awaking in the guest room.

. . . these did not suit her taste which, albeit quite eclectic, inclined toward Eastern thinkers, esoterica. . . .

—We're coming to, I expect.

The Wet Motorcycle

A pattern of writhing leaves made it a torture for him to behold.
He raised his cup, and, feeling nearly recovered, made his way into another room.
—I'm sorry to have kept you so late. Did you get enough sleep?
He saw the pool, and at its farther side her daughter napping in the sun.
—You interest me entirely.

He recalled a prior time she held him in her arms, but it was just that and nothing more. He could not lead her further, and she would not seduce him.
This movement unfastened her robe, it fell to one side. Beneath she wore a chiffon bodysuit fastened twice, at her breast, at her navel. She lowered her eyes and withdrew into her body.
I know you, he thought to whisper. . . .

Stephen fascinated the girl, next repelled her. With his polite, respectful words she could do nothing. And should he walk from their lives, never to return, she would not fret, she would not miss him. Yet should he remain, she would become inured to his presence, eventually.

She tapped upon the glass.
Wrapping her hair into the towel, the mother asked, *Did the cicadas wake you?*
The girl stared into the pool. The petals became still again.
—No.

*take a peep inside the pane
& watch the little spider playin'*

. . . notes that whirled, danced mysteriously.

A canvas chaise, set beside the shallow, petalstrewn pool.
But truly, this mood, not for letters.
The pencil slipped from his fingers, struck the concrete ground, acquired momentum and rolled over the edge into the pool. It sank a short depth then ascended, floated aimlessly with slight track of wave. . . .

And yet he could imagine tenderness, between that teacher and the child. . . .

The Wet Motorcycle

That child, I . . .

Belligerence arose inside him, crippling indignation, trepidation, in view of what had come to be.

The tablet slipped off his lap, struck the concrete ground, bruised at its edge of impact.

He cringed in servility to his ideal.

Mother and daughter escaped the hot cab, pulled from the trunk a carton of groceries and a leather sack of wines.

She found the chaise unoccupied. The girl kneeled, and slowly, gathered up his books and papers.

Beginning toward the house, her eyes met with her mother's and not either thought a smile. . . .

Outside his room she paused and, for reasons unknown to her, turned into her own room and looked inside.

Vacant. Intact.

There he sat in quietude, his back to the door. Gradually and suddenly, the trepidation had subsided. . . .

And how the subtle modulation of light and shadow, the still, sweet air nearly moist with pine, and the cicadae just outside the open window brought a new and complex intuition. A sentiment arose inside her. She felt she knew him absolutely, and found him curiously *impermanent*. . . .

—Beyond the pine? asked he with gesture she should enter, sit upon the chair beside the bureau.

She remained at the doorsill.

—I see it, said the girl toward another slate-laden path.

Here monarchs hovered low, did not seem to heed their presence.

The Wet Motorcycle

How evident to both that no one, no person had passed this way . . . for seasons, perhaps. . . .

—But you're always thinking, writing, sort of, aren't you?

At that moment she pressed onto a stone and stumbled. She took his hand.

She, looking to his eyes, and he, to her hand.

And there, amid burst white roses, the garter slept coiled about crooked wood lattice.

Carpeted, then, by bristle leaf, dusty cone pressed by the day, the lakeside seemed skirted in fur.

She felt her fingers through her hair. . . .

It's the pine tar. . . .

Together saw the grasses bend, power of the wind. Sea grasses undulating . . . water's current. . . . of these trees leaves left their twig, branches their bough.

What thievery, thought Stephen. Or displacement, just.

The flames glared across a photograph.

In it he, with pointer, stands before a classroom blackboard.

Father.

She placed aside her book, and went to it.

From the curves and shades and shadows, a composite was formed.

Stephen!

Areas of it had become smudged, such as where her fingers held it. These smudges, she believed, gave unto it an authenticity.

She took upon her lap her sketch box and with charcoal began it anew. She had imagined him entirely. . . .

Stephen!

The Wet Motorcycle

—I love the storm, he said.

—It doesn't frighten you?

—No.

—Never?

—No.

—I'm not frightened either.

And as they spoke, an air passed through the open window and disrupted the pages on the bed.

The garden, green by day, was black.

That music!

It seemed to him to be with her always.

With fingertips he cleared her face of hair and kissed her lips.

He drew the blanket to his chin, opening his eyes to realize not the blanket, but the woman's robe, instead.

Stepping to the open window, he noticed partial footprints crisscrossed. He stood over one and let his foot into it.

He dressed into his trunks, leaving the robe behind upon the bed.

He rose from the pool, uprighted the overturned chaise.

Her voice weakened. She inhaled deeply, repeatedly. She brought her forearm to rest atop the ridge of her nose, next quickly returned it to her side.

—I ran away. To Europe. To Luxembourg.

Then to Italy, where my child was born. I lost my friends. I lost my family. I suppose in a way I was fleeing them too.

She reached into the basket beside the chaise and withdrew a pair of eye pads and a small vessel of lotion and a dropper. Into the vessel she lowered the dropper, drawing in some lotion. Onto each pad she squeezed some drops. Resting back into the chaise, she placed the pads over her eyes.

The Wet Motorcycle

The woman stared into the emptied pool.

Anesthesia. Odor of Putrescence. Before him, an emptied depression. And the woman—collapsed, her belly rising and falling unsteadily.

He felt his legs succumb with the force of his perceptions.

An emptied depression! And there, before the landing, a narrow abyss had opened . . . in it a trunk held vertical by folds of earth. . . .

He reached for the trunk, saw in scaly bark netted strands of hair. He stabbed his arm into the fold, felt fingers curling over his. The fold let loose a jet of air . . . sprinkled his face . . . blinded him . . . released him.

He collapsed, his wide eyes toward the woman, her belly rising and falling unsteadily. . . .

About them midday played its sheer luxury.

The lake reflected nothing.

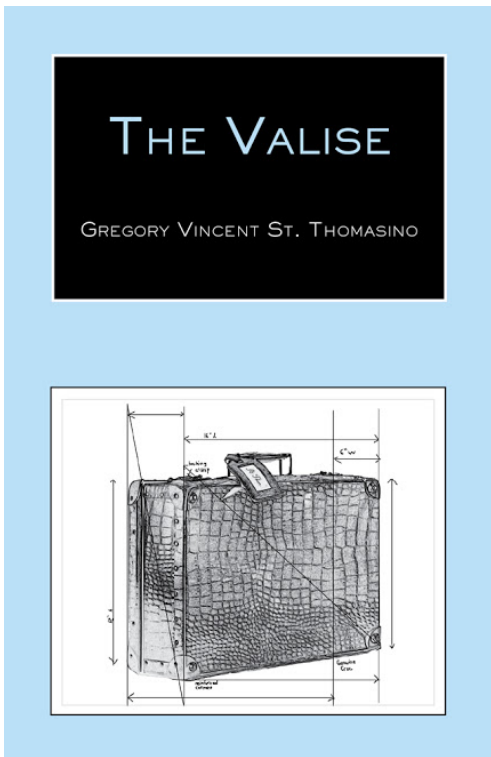
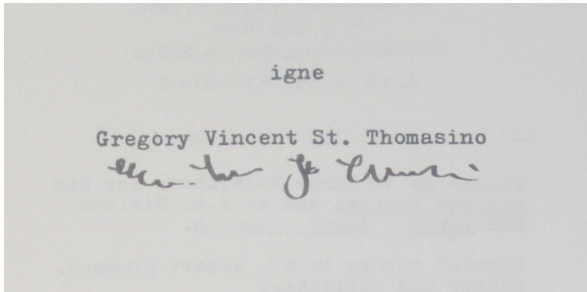
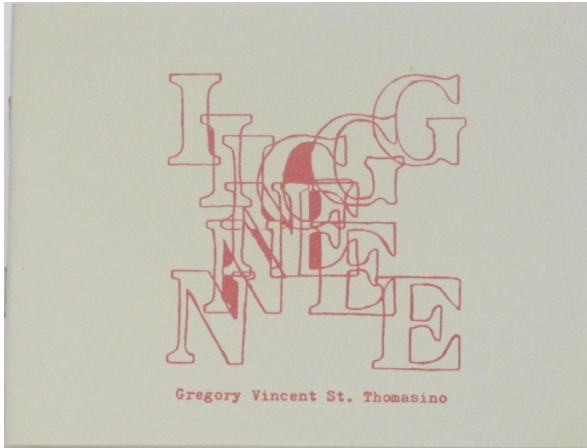
Stephen raised his hand, in it was aimed a pistol. He fired. And again. Into nowhere.

*New York City
1986–2004–2018*

The Wet Motorcycle

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Forewords by Jack Foley, host of Cover to Cover on KPFA, Berkeley, and Carey Scott Wilkerson, Columbus State University, Georgia.

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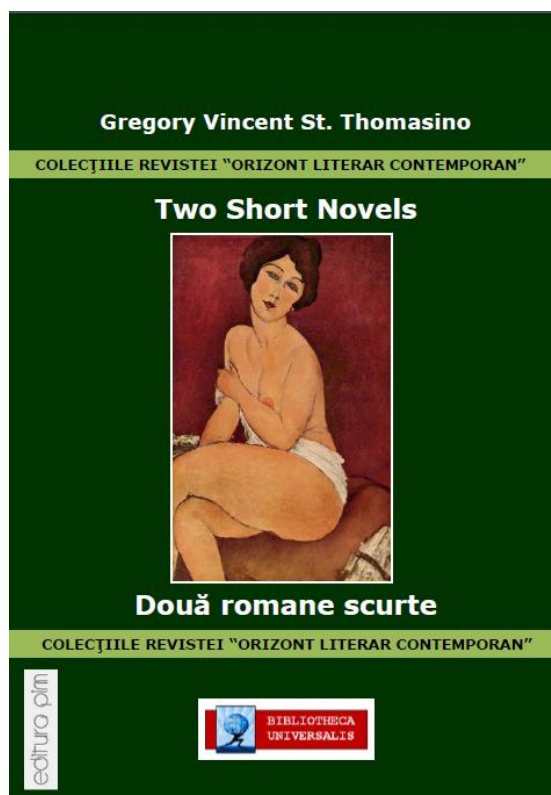
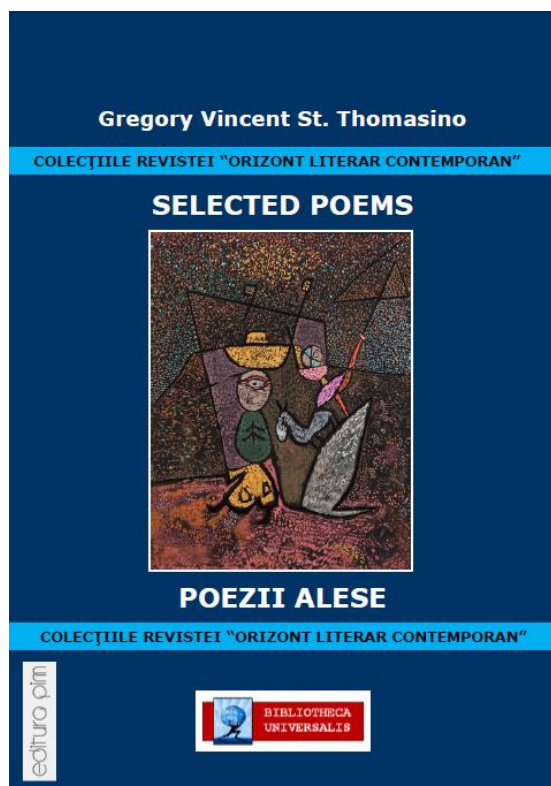
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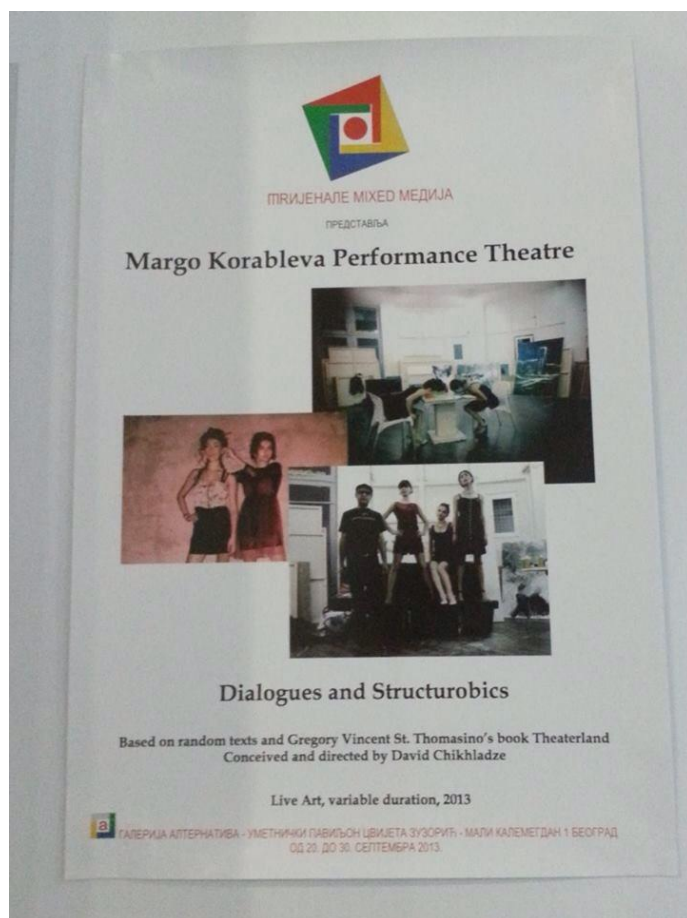
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