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## 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE JOHN FOWLES CENTER FOR CREATIVE WRITING

BY MARK AXELROD

**T**he John Fowles Center for Creative Writing promotes and advances the discipline of creative writing in all aspects: fiction, poetry, drama, creative non-fiction and screen/playwriting. The Center offers students and non-students alike an opportunity to gain a greater appreciation for the written word and those who write it. Each year a distinguished group of national and international writers is invited to Chapman University, making access to these writers available not only to the Chapman community, but both the Orange County and Southern California community as well.

Celebrating its 22nd Anniversary, the John Fowles Center has hosted inter/national writers such as: Nobel Laureates Mario Vargas Llosa and Wole Soyinka; Salman Rushdie; Maxine Hong Kingston; Edward Albee; Lawrence Ferlinghetti; Alain Robbe-Grillet; Gioconda Belli; Steve Katz; Pablo Neruda Prize winner, Raúl Zurita; Elias Khoury; Il Biental de Novela winner, Carlos Franz; Pulitzer Prize winner, John Ashbery; David Antin; Willis Barnstone, Nobel Nominees, Claudio Margris and Luisa Valenzuela; Giorgio Pressburger; Giuseppe Conte and Isabel Allende among many others.

For its 25th annual series, the John Fowles Center will host several new and returning artists including, Dacia Maraini, Luisa Valenzuela, Charles Bernstein, Andrei Kurkov, Regine Hamsun, granddaughter of Nobel Laureate, Knut Hamsun, and Barbara Epler, Robert Barsky and George Krevsky who will be part of a panel honoring the late Lawrence Ferlinghetti.





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## FICTION

### HUNGER

BY KNUT HAMSUN

TRANSLATED FROM THE  
NORWEGIAN BY GEORGE EGEKTON

It was during the time I wandered about and starved in Christiania: Christiania, this singular city, from which no man departs without carrying away the traces of his sojourn there.

I was lying awake in my attic and I heard a clock below strike six. It was already broad daylight, and people had begun to go up and down the stairs. By the door where the wall of the room was papered with old numbers of the Morgenbladet, I could distinguish clearly a notice from the Director of Lighthouses, and a little to the left of that an inflated advertisement of Fabian Olsens' new-baked bread.

The instant I opened my eyes I began, from sheer force of habit, to think if I had anything to rejoice over that day. I had been somewhat hard-up lately, and one after the other of my belongings had been taken to my "Uncle." I had grown nervous and irritable. A few times I had kept my bed for the day with vertigo. Now and then, when luck had favoured me, I had managed to get five shillings for a feuilleton from some newspaper or other.

It grew lighter and lighter, and I took to reading the advertisements near the door. I could even make out the grinning lean letters of "winding-sheets to be had at Miss Andersen's" on the right of it. That occupied me for a long while. I heard the clock below strike eight as I got up and put on my clothes. I opened the window and looked out. From where I was standing I had a view of a clothes-line and an open field. Farther away lay the ruins of a burnt-out smithy, which some labourers were busy clearing away. I leant with my elbows resting on the window-frame and gazed into open space. It promised to be a clear day--autumn, that tender, cool time of the year, when all things change their colour, and die, had come to us. The ever-increasing noise in the streets lured me out. The bare room, the floor of which rocked up and down with every step I took across it, seemed like a gasping, sinister coffin. There was no proper fastening to the door, either, and no stove. I used to lie on my socks at night to dry them a little by the morning. The only thing I had to divert myself with was a little red rocking-chair, in which I used to sit in the evenings and doze and muse on all manner of things. When it blew hard, and the door below stood open, all kinds of eerie sounds moaned up through the floor and from out the walls, and the Morgenbladet near the door was rent in strips a span long. I stood up and

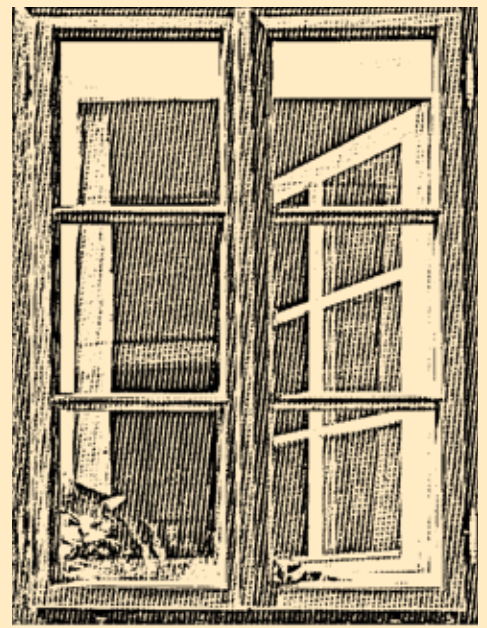
searched through a bundle in

the corner by the bed for a bite for breakfast, but finding nothing, went back to the window.

God knows, thought I, if looking for employment will ever again avail me aught. The frequent repulses, half-promises, and curt noes, the cherished, deluded hopes, and fresh endeavours that always resulted in nothing had done my courage to death. As a last resource, I had applied for a place as debt collector, but I was too late, and, besides, I could not have found the fifty shillings demanded as security. There was always something or another in my way. I had even offered to enlist in the Fire Brigade. There we stood and waited in the vestibule, some half-hundred men, thrusting our chests out to give an idea of strength and bravery, whilst an inspector walked up and down and scanned the applicants, felt their arms, and put one question or another to them. Me, he passed by, merely shaking his head, saying I was rejected on account of my sight. I applied again without my glasses, stood there with knitted brows, and made my eyes as sharp as needles, but the man passed me by again with a smile; he had recognized me. And, worse than all, I could no longer apply for a situation in the garb of a respectable man.

How regularly and steadily things had gone downhill with me for a long time, till, in the end, I was so curiously bared of every conceivable thing. I had not even a comb left, not even a book to read, when things grew all too sad with me. All through the summer, up in the churchyards or parks, where I used to sit and write my articles for the newspapers, I had thought out column after column on the most miscellaneous subjects. Strange ideas, quaint fancies, conceits of my restless brain; in despair I had often chosen the most remote themes, that cost me long hours of intense effort, and never were accepted. When one piece was finished I set to work at another. I was not often discouraged by the editors' "no." I used to tell myself constantly that some day I was bound to succeed; and really occasionally when I was in luck's way, and made a hit with something, I could =get five shillings for an afternoon's work.

Once again I raised myself from the window, went over to the washing-stand, and sprinkled some water on

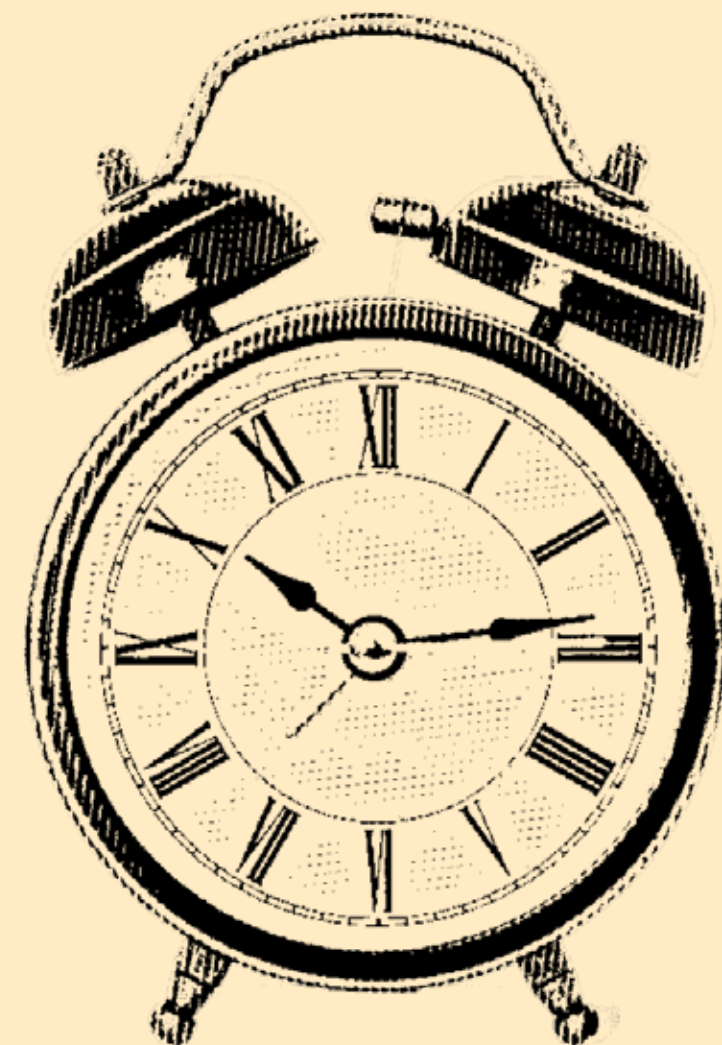


the shiny knees of my trousers to dull them a little and make them look a trifle newer. Having done this, I pocketed paper and pencil as usual and went out. I stole very quietly down the stairs in order not to attract my landlady's attention (a few days had elapsed since my rent had fallen due, and I had no longer anything wherewith to raise it).

It was nine o'clock. The roll of vehicles and hum of voices filled the air, a mighty morning-choir mingled with the footsteps of the pedestrians, and the crack of the hack-drivers' whips. The clamorous traffic everywhere exhilarated me at once, and I began to feel more and more contented. Nothing was farther from my intention than to merely take a morning walk in the open air. What had the air to do with my lungs? I was strong as a giant; could stop a dray with my shoulders. A sweet, unwonted mood, a feeling of lightsome happy-go-luckiness took possession of me. I fell to observing the people I met and who passed me, to reading the placards on the wall, noted even the impression of a glance thrown at me from a passing tram-car, let each bagatelle, each trifling incident that crossed or vanished from my path impress me.

If one only had just a little to eat on such a lightsome day! The sense of the glad morning overwhelmed me; my satisfaction became ill-regulated, and for no definite reason I began to hum joyfully.

At a butcher's stall a woman stood speculating on sausage for dinner. As I passed her she looked up at me. She had but one tooth in the front of her head. I had become so nervous and easily affected in the last few days that the woman's face made a loathsome impression upon me. The long yellow snag looked like





a little finger pointing out of her gum, and her gaze was still full of sausage as she turned it upon me. I immediately lost all appetite, and a feeling of nausea came over me. When I reached the market-place I went to the fountain and drank a little. I looked up; the dial marked ten on Our Saviour's tower.

I went on through the streets, listlessly, without troubling myself about anything at all, stopped aimlessly at a corner, turned off into a side street without having any errand there. I simply let myself go, wandered about in the pleasant morning, swinging myself care-free to and fro amongst other happy human beings. This air was clear and bright and my mind too was without a shadow.

For quite ten minutes I had had an old lame man ahead of me. He carried a bundle in one hand and exerted his whole body, using all his strength in his endeavours to get along speedily. I could hear how he panted from the exertion, and it occurred to me that I might offer to bear his bundle for him, but yet I made no effort to overtake him. Up in Graendsen I met Hans Pauli, who nodded and hurried past me. Why was he in such a hurry? I had not the slightest intention of asking him for a shilling, and, more than that, I intended at the very first opportunity to return him a blanket which I had borrowed from him some weeks before.



Just wait until I could get my foot on the ladder, I would be beholden to no man, not even for a blanket. Perhaps even this very day I might commence an article on the "Crimes of Futurity," "Freedom of Will," or what not, at any rate, something worth reading, something for which I would at least get ten shillings.... And at the thought of this article I felt myself fired with a desire to set to work immediately

and to draw from the contents of my overflowing brain. I would find a suitable place to write in the park and not rest until I had completed my article.

But the old cripple was still making the same sprawling movements ahead of me up the street. The sight of this infirm creature constantly in front of me, commenced to irritate me--his journey seemed endless; perhaps he had made up his mind to go to exactly the same place as I had, and I must needs have him before my eyes the whole way. In my irritation it seemed to me that he slackened his pace a little at every cross street, as if waiting to see which direction I intended to take, upon which he would again swing his bundle in the air and peg away with all his might to keep ahead of me. I follow and watch this tiresome creature and get more and more exasperated with him, I am conscious that he has, little by little, destroyed my happy mood and dragged the pure, beautiful morning down to the level of his own ugliness. He looks like a great sprawling reptile striving with might and main to win a place in the world and reserve the footpath for himself. When we reached the top of the hill I determined to put up with it no longer. I turned to a shop window and stopped in order to give him an opportunity of getting ahead, but when, after a lapse of some minutes, I again walked on there was the man still in front of me--he too had stood stock still,--without stopping to reflect I made three or four furious onward strides, caught him up, and slapped him on the shoulder.

He stopped directly, and we both stared at one another fixedly. "A halfpenny for milk!" he whined, twisting his head askew.

So that was how the wind blew. I felt in my pockets and said: "For milk, eh? Hum-m--money's scarce these times, and I don't really know how much you are in need of it."

"I haven't eaten a morsel since yesterday in Drammen; I haven't got a farthing, nor have I got any work yet!"

"Are you an artisan?"

"Yes; a binder."

"A what?"

"A shoe-binder; for that matter, I can make shoes too."



"Ah, that alters the case," said I, "you wait here for some minutes and I shall go and get a little money for you; just a few pence."

I hurried as fast as I could down Pyle Street, where I knew of a pawnbroker on a second-floor (one, besides, to whom I had never been before). When I got inside the hall I hastily took off my waistcoat, rolled it up, and put it under my arm; after which I went upstairs and knocked at the office door. I bowed on entering, and threw the waistcoat on the counter.

"One-and-six," said the man.

"Yes, yes, thanks," I replied. "If it weren't that it was beginning to be a little tight for me, of course I wouldn't part with it."

I got the money and the ticket, and went back. Considering all things, pawning that waistcoat was a capital notion. I would have money enough over for a plentiful breakfast, and before evening my thesis on the "Crimes of Futurity" would be ready. I began to find existence more alluring; and I hurried back to the man to get rid of him.

"There it is," said I. "I am glad you applied to me first."

The man took the money and scrutinized me closely. At what was he standing there staring? I had a feeling that he particularly examined the knees of my trousers, and his shameless effrontery bored me. Did the scoundrel imagine that I really was as poor as I looked? Had I not as good as begun to write an article for half-a-sovereign? Besides, I had no fear whatever for the future. I had many irons in the fire. What on earth business was it of an utter stranger if I chose to stand him a drink on such a lovely day? The man's look annoyed me, and I made up my mind to give him a good

dressing-down before I left him. I threw back my shoulders, and said:

"My good fellow, you have adopted a most unpleasant habit of staring at a man's knees when he gives you a shilling."

He leant his head back against the wall and opened his mouth widely; something was working in that empty pate of his, and he evidently came to the conclusion that I meant to best him in some way, for he handed me back the money. I stamped on the pavement, and, swearing at him, told him to keep it. Did he imagine I was going to all that trouble for nothing? If all came to all, perhaps I owed him this shilling; I had just recollected an old debt; he was standing before an honest man, honourable to his finger-tips--in short, the money was his. Oh, no thanks were needed; it had been a pleasure to me. Good-bye!

I went on. At last I was freed from this work-ridden plague, and I could go my way in peace. I turned down Pyle Street again, and stopped before a grocer's shop. The whole window was filled with eatables, and I decided to go in and get something to take with me.

"A piece of cheese and a French roll," I said, and threw my sixpence on to the counter.

"Bread and cheese for the whole of it?" asked the woman ironically, without looking up at me.

"For the whole sixpence? Yes," I answered, unruffled.

I took them up, bade the fat old woman good-morning, with the utmost politeness, and sped, full tilt, up Castle Hill to the park.

## VOICES

BY DACIA MARAINI

### CHAPTER I

The taxi drops me in front of the gate in the Via Santa Cecilia. But why do I have such a feeling of suspense? I am back home again, I say to myself, I have come back. But how is it that I can hardly recognise this gate, this courtyard, this apartment building with its array of open windows? It feels as if I have a thorn in the roof of my mouth, like the premonition of some disaster. What is waiting for me on this mild morning that brings with it all the familiar smells of returning home? What is it that weighs down my thoughts as if it wanted to twist them and obliterate them?



My eyes search for Stefana, the doorkeeper. At this time of day she is usually in the porter's lodge sorting out the mail but I do not see either her or her tall, lanky husband Giovanni. I cross the courtyard pulling my suitcase behind me; its wheels drag reluctantly across the gravel. I stop for a moment in the middle of the courtyard with its surface of crushed stones and look around me. As always the oleanders and the pink geraniums are still there in the flowerbeds even though they are veiled by a film of summer dust; the little fountain of mossy stone still drips with a noise

like the trickle of a broken tap; the two big lime trees are laden with flowers. They seem the only things that are not drooping in the heat and which are impervious to the heavy atmosphere that today hangs oppressively. They stand there with their bundles of downy scented flowers tossing gently in the light summer wind.

The windows overlook the courtyard as if they were watching eyes but today they all seem blind; the stairs too are deserted and strangely silent. With a weary sigh the lift deposits me on the top floor, my floor.

While I am looking for the keys in my handbag, I become aware of a strong smell of hospital disinfectant. I turn round and see that the door of the opposite apartment is half-open. I take a step forward and push it with my finger. I watch it swing back very gently, revealing a passage bathed in sunlight, the fringed edge of a rolled-up carpet and a pair of blue canvas tennis shoes placed neatly beside the door.

My glance lingers. I am puzzled; my eyes are held by those blue shoes so clean and bright in the sunshine, bringing to mind the memory of happy walks, skipping on tiptoe, chasing balls as they fly across tennis courts. Why are they lying there, paired together, motionless, unlaced and undamaged, beside the open door? They are too carefully placed for anyone to have thrown them off impatiently as they came into the apartment. There is something so neat and precise about the way they are exposed to public gaze with the laces wound round the upper part of the shoe.



I can hear voices coming from the other end of the apartment, and then suddenly I see Stefana's face in front of me with her sad, plaintive eyes.

"Didn't you know?"

"Know what?"

"She died five days ago, she was murdered."

"Murdered!"

"Yes, twenty stab wounds from a frenzied attack . . . and they still haven't found him . . . poor us!"

A soft, expressive voice, the pupils of her eyes sliding up to show the white of the cornea. I am reminded of a painting by Delacroix; a look of alarm as if someone has seen catastrophe hanging above them in their mind's eye and has been unable to find words to describe it; an indoor pallor that "feeds off the lives of others", as Marco says. Yet Stefana Mario is an intelligent, well-informed woman. I look at her large capable hands. Can it have been those hands that laid out the body of the dead woman?

"But why on earth was she murdered?"

"No one knows, it seems nothing was stolen . . . it was just terrible, you should have seen it. Then when the police arrived, along with the examining magistrate, forensic scientists, journalists, photographers, the lot; their dirty shoes went trailing up and down the stairs . . . The funeral was the day before yesterday . . . Now we've cleaned up everything but there'll still be police in there measuring . . . they say that today they're going to put seals on the doors."

I am aware how I am clutching hold of my keys with such force that they are hurting my fingers.

"Stefana, would you like to come in and I'll make you a cup of coffee?"

"No, I've got to go back downstairs. There's no one in the porter's lodge."

I hear her quick footsteps as she goes downstairs in her patched shoes that give out a light muffled thud at each step.

I open the door to my apartment and pull my suitcase inside. I sniff the air, which smells shut in and fusty. I throw open the shutters. I bend down to look at the plants. They are flagging, all pale and dusty yet not short of water. Stefana has been watering them every day as we agreed. But being shut away in the silence of an empty apartment makes them lose heart; my plants don't like being left on their own and they are telling me this very clearly, whispering behind my back in husky voices.

I sit down at my desk in front of a pile of letters which have come while I was away. I open one but realise that I am reading the words without taking in their meaning. I go back to the first sentence two, three times, then I give up. My thoughts, like the yellow donkey I once saw in a painting by Chagall, are flying mysteriously out of the picture frame. I ask myself what I know about this neighbour of mine who was stabbed to death. Nothing. A woman living behind the door



opposite to mine and I do not even know her name.

I would meet her sometimes in the lift. I would look at her much as one looks at someone on the next seat in a train or a bus, with the feeling of guilt for my ill-mannered curiosity. But why on earth should it be ill-mannered to be interested in the person who lives in the apartment opposite mine?

My neighbour was tall and elegant; her light chestnut hair cut short in the shape of a helmet, a small delicate nose, a well-defined upper lip that when it wrinkled into a smile, revealed slightly protruding infant teeth. The smile of a rabbit I thought when I saw her for the first time, shy and timid like someone who is accustomed to nibbling at secret thoughts. Big grey eyes, a broad forehead, a soft white skin strewn with freckles. Her voice, on the rare occasions I heard it, seemed muffled as if she were afraid of exposing herself or being a bother, a colourless voice lacking expression and surrendering to shyness, yet with unexpected flickers of light-heartedness and daring.

Like me she lived alone while Stefana and her less visible husband watched over us like two indulgent, elderly parents, although in reality they are more or less our own age.

But why did my neighbor often come back so late at night? Sometimes when I was half-asleep, I would hear her door close with a thud and the key being forced to turn in the lock. Even the shutters were bolted with a loud, energetic clatter. Every morning and every evening I'd hear them being slammed open or shut. Why did she go out in the morning so silently, looking tired and dazed? And why did she sometimes leave looking so furtive and carrying with her nothing but a yellow rucksack?

According to our neighbours, both of us were in need of protection because we lived alone, because we had tiring jobs that often kept us away from home, me with my work for radio and she . . . but here I am brought to a standstill because I do not know any more.

I pick up the letter again and start reading it. It is a bill from my accountant. Then there is the electricity bill already overdue and the telephone bill only a few days before it has to be settled.

Lastly a chain letter telling me to "copy this and send it off to ten friends. If you do this you will have good luck in the future; if you do not you will have trouble for seven years."

Just like when one breaks a mirror . . . I throw it into the wastepaper basket.

My glance falls on the answering machine, the red eye is flashing imperiously. I press the message button. "Hullo Michela, it's Tirinnanzi. Are you still not back from your refresher course? Ring

me as soon as you get back. 'Bye." A click, a rustling, a metallic voice that accentuates the syllables. "Thursday June twenty-third twelve-twenty p.m." And then female voice I do not recognize. "Dear Michela Canova I am . . ." but the message is interrupted by a mysterious click. The voice reminds me of my neighbour but why should she have wanted to ring me? Another click, the metallic voice intoning "Friday June twenty-fourth eight-thirty a.m. Excuse me if . . . I'd like to talk to you about . . ." But once again the sentence is abruptly interrupted. It really does

sound like my neighbour's voice. But when did she die? Stefana said it was five days ago. But five days would be precisely the 24th of June.

I go on to listen to other messages but I do not hear any more of that hesitant voice with the sudden interruptions. I must find out the exact time of her death. I tell myself. I remove the cassette from the answering machine and put it away inside an envelope.



## TO HAVE BEEN

BY CLAUDIO MAGRIS

And so Jerry is dead, ever mind, that isn't the problem, neither for him nor anyone else, not even for me who loved him and still love him, because love doesn't conjugate - my God, in that sense, of course, what's next, though love has its grammar and doesn't know tense only verbal moods, in fact just one, the present infinitive, when you love it's forever and the rest doesn't matter. Any love, any kind of love. It's not true that you get over it, nothing goes away, and this is often the particular rub but you carry it along with you, like life, and not even that is not really such great luck, except that you get over love even less than life. It's there, like starlight, who gives a damn if they are alive or dead, they shine and that's that, and though in the daytime you can't see them but you know they are there.



So we won't hear that guitar anymore, and that's fine too, you can learn to get along without anything. God, how he could play. And when his hand didn't work anymore, he pulled down the blinds and kissed it all goodbye. To that, I've no objection. Sooner or later it happens, and it doesn't matter how anyway it has to happen, and who knows how many of us here this evening, ladies and gentlemen, will be alive in a month's time, certainly not everybody, it's statistically impossible. Someone who is pushing his neighbor or complaining because the person in front of him is blocking his view of the stage has already gone to barber for the last time, but never mind, a year more or less doesn't make much difference, I don't feel bad for those who kick the bucket and I don't envy those who keep on going, nor do I care much to know what group I fall into.

Amen for Jerry, and for everybody and everything. As I said, I can't find fault with his dissection, when someone wants to get off the bus, it's right to get off, and if he prefers to jump off while it's still moving before the stop, that's his business. Someone can be fed up, tired, unable to take it anymore, what do I know.

When seeing him down like that because he couldn't play as before, to cheer him up I told him that he had been one of the greats of the guitar, and he said that for him it wasn't enough to have been. He wanted to be - it didn't matter what, a musician, a lover, anything, but to be.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, in that moment I understood what great luck it is to be born like me, or to have an uncle or grandfather or whomever, born in Bratislava or Lwów or Kaloea or in any other dump in this shabby Central Europe, which is a hell, a real cesspool. It's enough to smell that musty odor, that stink which is the same from Vienna to Czernowitz, but at least it doesn't force you to be, on the contrary. Yes, if Jerry had understood, when his hand didn't work anymore, his great luck in having been, the freedom, the vacation, the great privilege of not having to be anymore, of not having to play anymore, his free pass from the barracks of life!

But maybe he couldn't, since he wasn't born or raised in that stagnant Pannonian air, thick as a blanket, in that smoke-filled tavern where you eat badly and drink even worse, but are happy to be there when it's raining outside, in life, it's always raining and the wind cuts through you. Yes, any grocer in Nitra or Varaždin could teach all of Fifth Avenue - except for those maybe who come from Nitra or Varaždin or some other place in those parts - the happiness of having been.



Oh, the modesty, the lightness of having been, that uncertain and accommodating space where everything is light as a feather, against the presumption, the weight, the squalor, the freight of being! Please, I'm not talking about any kind of past and even less about nostalgia, which is stupid and hurtful, as the world itself says, nostalgia, the pain of returning. The past is horrific, we are barbaric and evil, but our grandparents are great-grandparents were even fiercer savages. I certainly wouldn't want to be, to live in their time. No, I'm

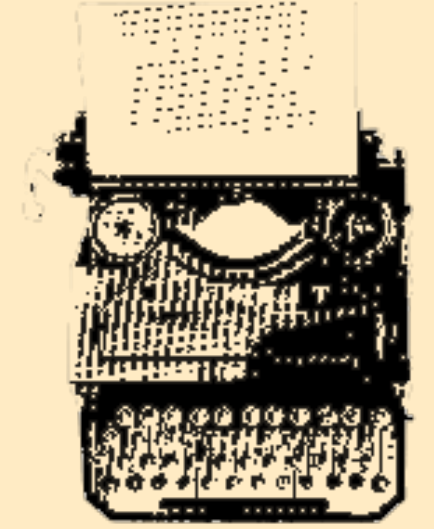
saying that I would want to have always already been, exempt from the military service of existing. A slight disability is sometimes a way out, protecting you from the obligation of joining in and losing your skin.

Being hurts, it doesn't let up. Do this, do that, work, struggle, win, fall in love, be happy, if you're not how shameful. So, you do all you can to obey, to be as good and clever and happy as you ought, but how can you, things just fall like a chunk of masonry off a roof, a wicked punch or worse. You walk hugging the walls and avoid those crazy cars, but the walls are crumbling, sharp rock and glass slicing your skin and making you bleed, you are in bed with someone and for an instant you understand what real life could and should be and it is an unbearable pang - picking your clothes off the floor, getting dressed, getting out and away. Luckily there's a bar nearby, how good a coffee or beer tastes.



Yes, drinking a beer, for instance, is a way of having been. You're there, sitting down, you look at the foam evaporating, a little bubble every second, a heartbeat, one beat less, rest and the promise of rest for your tired heart; everything is behind you. I remember that my grandmother, when we went to visit her in Szabadka, would cover and put away the iron table, so that we children wouldn't get hurt when we ran into something racing around the house, and she would cover the electric plugs. To have been in this, living in this space where there are no sharp corners; you don't scrape your knee, you can't turn on the lamp that hurts your eyes, all is quiet, time out, no ambush.

So, ladies and gentlemen, this is the heritage that Central Europe has left us. A safe-deposit box, empty but with a lock on it to keep out bank robbers who might want to put who knows what inside it. Empty, nothing that grabs your heart and bites into your soul, life is there, already been, secure, safe from any accident, an out-of-circulation bank note for a hundred old crowns that



you hang on the wall, under glass, with no fear of inflation. Even in a novel, the best part at least for the writer, is the epilogue. Everything has already happened, been written, worked out; the characters live happily ever after or are dead, it's all the same, in any case nothing more can happen. The writer holds the epilogue in his hands; rereads it, maybe changes a comma, but he runs no risk.

Every epilogue is happy, because it's an epilogue. You go out on the balcony, a breeze comes through the geraniums and the violets of thought, a drop of rain slides down your face; if it rains harder you like to listen to the drumming of the fat drops on the awning. When it stops, you go take a little stroll, you exchange a few words with the neighbor you meet on the stairs; neither for him nor you does it matter what's said, it's just a pleasure to hesitate there a moment and from the window on the landing you can see way down there in the distance a strip of sea that the sun, now out from behind the clouds, lights up like a knife blade. Next week we're going to Florence, your neighbor says. O yes, it's nice, I've been there. And in this way you save yourself the fuss of traveling, the lines, the heat, the crowds, looking for a restaurant. A stroll in the evening air fresh with rain, then back home. You must not wear yourself out, otherwise you'll get too excited and sleep won't come. Insomnia, ladies and gentlemen, believe me, is a terrible thing. It crushes you, suffocates you, follows at your heels, chases you, poisons you - yes, insomnia is the supreme form of being - insomnia, that's why you have to sleep, sleeping is the only antechamber of the true having already been, but meanwhile it's already something, a sigh of relief...



## ANGELINA'S LIPS

BY GIUSEPPE CONTE

Somewhere in his hippyish youth, Umberto Umber had read that California is situated at the bottom of an inclined plane and that whatever is not well-rooted tumbles down. Having arrived at an advanced age and always feeling totally free of any kind of attachment, rather than tumble down there, he chose to slide blithely into a position at a California university and a home in Laguna Beach where, despite the distance of thousands of kilometres, it seems like being in a more extensive and tranquil Côte D'Azur. Professor Umber had no real ties to anything tangible. He was Italian, even if in Italy his name led people to believe that he was a foreigner. There or abroad, many colleagues poked fun at the striking similarity between his name and that of the protagonist of that very famous twentieth-century novel. He would patiently smile while noting that he lacked two "h"s and an extra "t"

in order to be the namesake of that character in Lolita.

With a mischievous glance, he would also add that he had never had a thing for young girls. This was true. He had never been tempted by any of his students. He had never had lovers. He had been married to an energetic and strong-willed woman, a lawyer who earned ten times what he did. The marriage ended after a few years, and so sweetly that he could not even remember the reason why. He considered himself fortunate since, based on the experiences of so many of his colleagues, he knew what kinds of mental and financial devastation a divorce can bring. He owned no property. His parents, whom he had lost early in life, left him an apartment and some investments. He had sold everything.

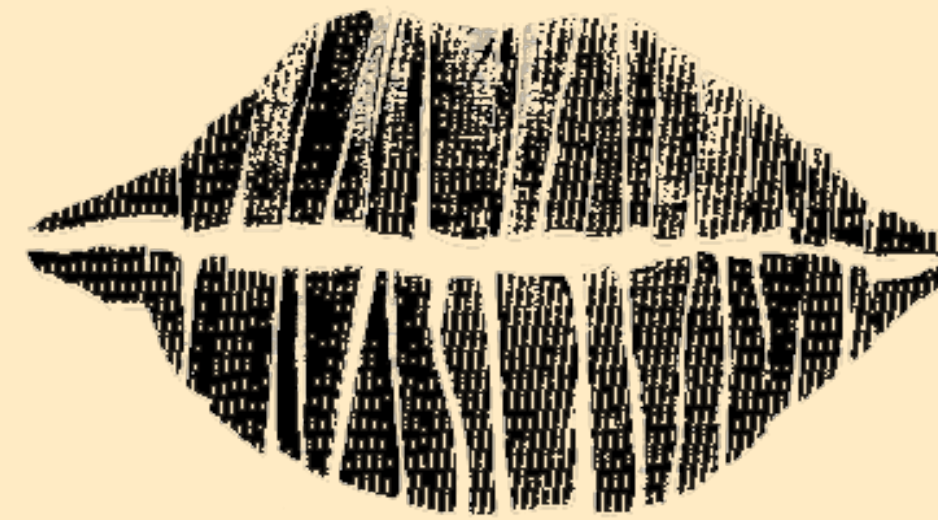
After the divorce, he always rented furnished apartments, reducing to the bare minimum what he would have to transport with each move. All he needed was an apartment

with two rooms. If it was near a port, better still. He was a professor of comparative literature and he would find the books he needed for his works in the libraries of the universities that would hire him to teach. This way, Umberto Umber moved around light as a feather. Even his wardrobe was reduced to the essentials: a few jackets, lots of t-shirts and shirts, jeans, loafers. That was enough in California. He was staying in the hills of Laguna Beach, on that particular hill that the fires occasionally ravage, but at a reasonable distance - a mere stroll from the beach of fine ivory sand in front of the open ocean.

He had kept his European habits. He would walk down to have breakfast in a cafe where he would drink a cappuccino with a muffin or croissant while leafing through the Los Angeles Times in search of curious news items. In the evening he would dine at a restaurant where, by now, all the waiters knew him and would greet him with a handshake when he arrived and when he left. He would eat some kind of lavish salad with shrimp

or turkey accompanied by a glass of red wine. He was a man whose life was of no importance to anyone. There was no woman who loved him, nor did he feel the need for one. He had students, male and female, but it was evident that they did not need him for their studies. He had many acquaintances, but not one true friend.

In the end, he wouldn't have known what to share with a friend. He wouldn't even know what to discuss since he wasn't interested in anything. In his opinion, the academic life, politics, sports, economics held no attraction at all. He didn't allow himself to be overwhelmed by memories, despite his advanced age. No nostalgia bound him to Italy where he was born and raised, not to France where he had taught for a number of years, nor to California where he had taught for a number of years, nor to his youth. Drifting into California was natural for him since no attachment held him back. So, there he was, in front of the immeasurable vastness of the Pacific. Toward evening, he would



go out again and stay a long while along the ocean front, among the gardens, boardwalks, and benches, then he would go down to the beach and gaze into the horizon. Beyond the horizon there was Asia, the rising sun. He was feeling good there, in the twilight.

\*\*\*

If it is true that Professor Umber had no real ties to anything tangible, this does not mean that he had no ties at all. He did, and how! But with beings whose lives manifest themselves in the world of imagination, with beings who are the most concrete and vibrant forms of unreality. He had no ties to characters in books, poems and novels that he had read about over the course of his existence and for which he developed an unhealthy love consisting of fantasies and further fictions. As an obscure scholar, he published the minimum that would allow him to continue an equally obscure academic career. The fact is that, as opposed to a more analytical relationship whose importance and heroic grandeur he did recognize, he preferred a licentious love affair with literary characters straight away. It was a weakness and he knew it. Perhaps even an embarrassment. But there was nothing he could do about it.

Like so many adolescents, he had fallen in love with the images of the great divas of the day, especially Gina Lollobrigida and Marilyn Monroe. With the former, he had imagined brief encounters in the back of a Rolls Royce, fervid kisses on stupendously drawn lips, and neck and breasts as white as pure flour, snow, sugar. When as an older man he crossed paths with the already aged diva in an airport, it was still the absolute whiteness of her skin that struck him. With the latter, it had been something else entirely - a real love story. He

had danced with her better than Yves Montand in Let's Make Love; he'd kissed her better than Tony Curtis in Some Like it Hot; he'd spoken to her better than Arthur Miller that evening he grasped her big toe between his fingers and began seducing her at a party. He immersed himself in her carnality, to resurface as pure spirit. He loved her as if he had had her right there, in his room, as a boy, all for himself. When he received the news of her suicide, it seemed as if he had lost a part of his world, the most innocent and unhealthy.

However, in that same period there began to stir in him the first signs of love that, different from the first few if any would have experienced. As a boy, Umber began to isolate the characters from the pages of his books and to fantasize about them, dream of them, spend hours and hours of his day with them. Then, he just carried on with it. It was his secret, his incurable disease. The young Princess Nausicaa of the Odyssey captured his imagination. As if Homer's verses were not enough, in his folly Umber added little touches of color to the character. He imagined her hairstyle, gait, garments, and more: her lips, hands, breasts, thighs.

There were no limits to his audacity and his longing. Without the least respect, he lifted Francesca da Rimini from the Divine Comedy and, taking the place of Paolo, he repeatedly relived the adulterous act with her after that book of love had inspired them to look into each other's eyes,

making them turn pale with sweat, and tremble to death. For years he was the boyfriend of Rosalind, the main character of As You Like It. That was what he liked: a girl, as Shakespeare knew how to imagine her, in a concealing outfit, wandering in the Forest of Arden with such a natural allure that no disguise could diminish it. Then, he was in love with Ottilie, the character from Elective Affinities. He shared her thoughts, her paints; he was constantly moved to tears by the chemical inevitability of her fate.

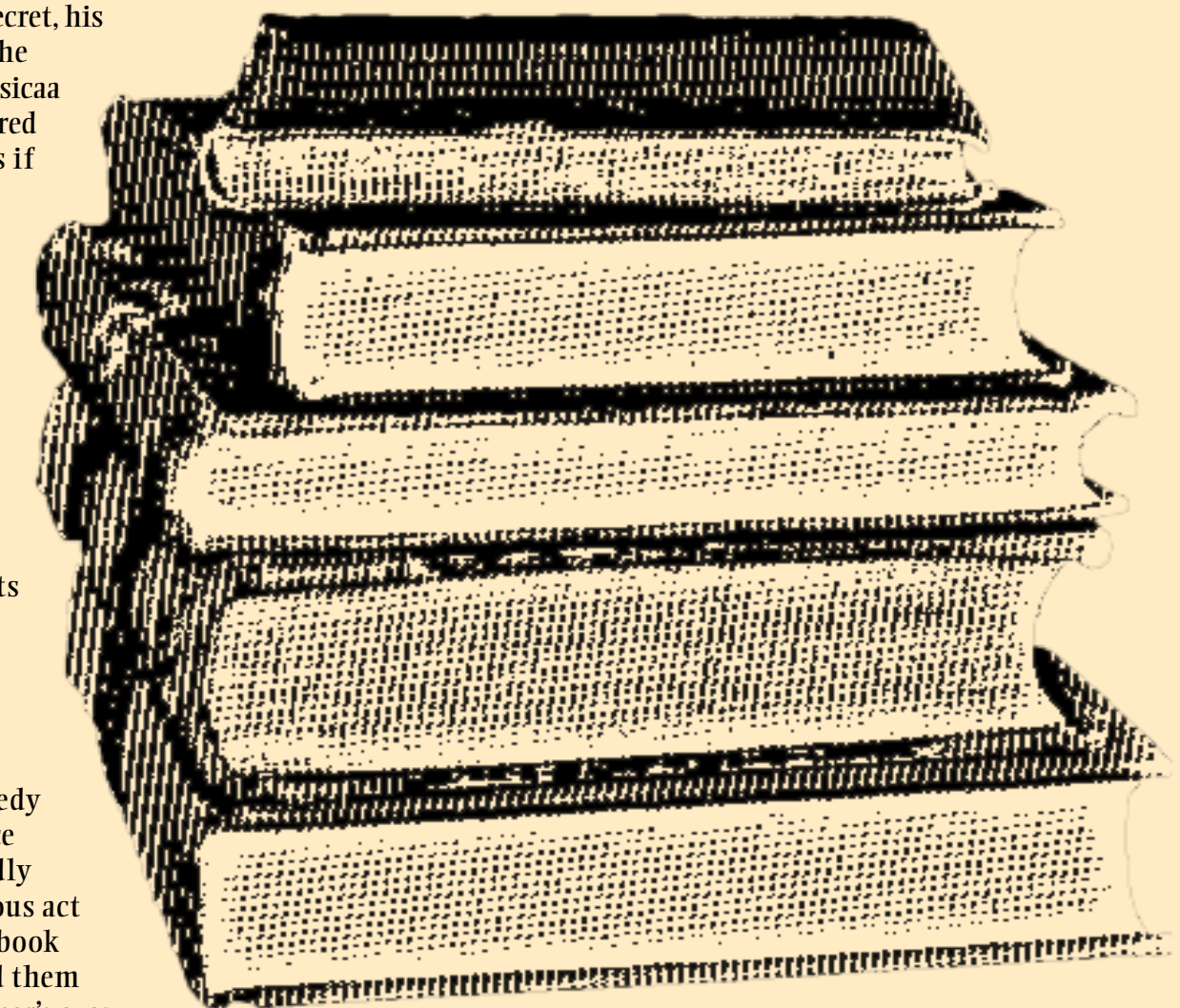
Umber posed no limits on himself. Between Frodo and Quasimodo, Phoebus and Gringoire, he allowed himself to be seduced by Esméralda, the fatally beautiful gypsy of The Hunchback of Notre Dame. He wandered through the woods of the Friuli and the quays of Venice with La Pisana of Confessions of an Italian. He burst the banks of propriety with Connie Chatterley. He not only had breakfast with Holly Golightly at Tiffany's, but at all the best jewellery shops in restaurants in New York, Paris and London. There is no need to believe that these affairs were exclusively sexual. Umber would fall in love with the woman only if he considered her a well-written character.

As he got older, he also frequently fell in love with male

characters. Although the catalogue of conquests would be too long to list, he certainly had affairs with Robinson Crusoe, Tristram Shandy, Fra Cristoforo, David Copperfield, Jean Valjean, Ahab, Captain Nemo, Jim Hawkins, Sherlock Holmes, Andrei Bolkonki, Dick Diver, Leopold Bloom, Cosimo Piovasco di Rondo and many, many others. When he had a character in his head with whom he could interact and with whom imagine new adventures, he was never alone. There were the relationships that gave meaning to his life, that filled it at times with boundless joy - absurd yet undeniable - of which he was almost ashamed.

You can probably imagine the discomfort that would seize Professor Umber when he heard his more academically respected colleagues debate the "death of the novel." For him, the death of the novel meant the death of a troupe of characters he lived with, the death of a part of himself. Luckily for him, these stories were less prevalent

in California. So, while walking by the ocean at Laguna Beach, he could continue to ponder how he could have saved Esmeralda from Follo's vile dagger or to imagine a fifty-something Connie Chatterley betraying Mellors with a young aristocrat. Why not?



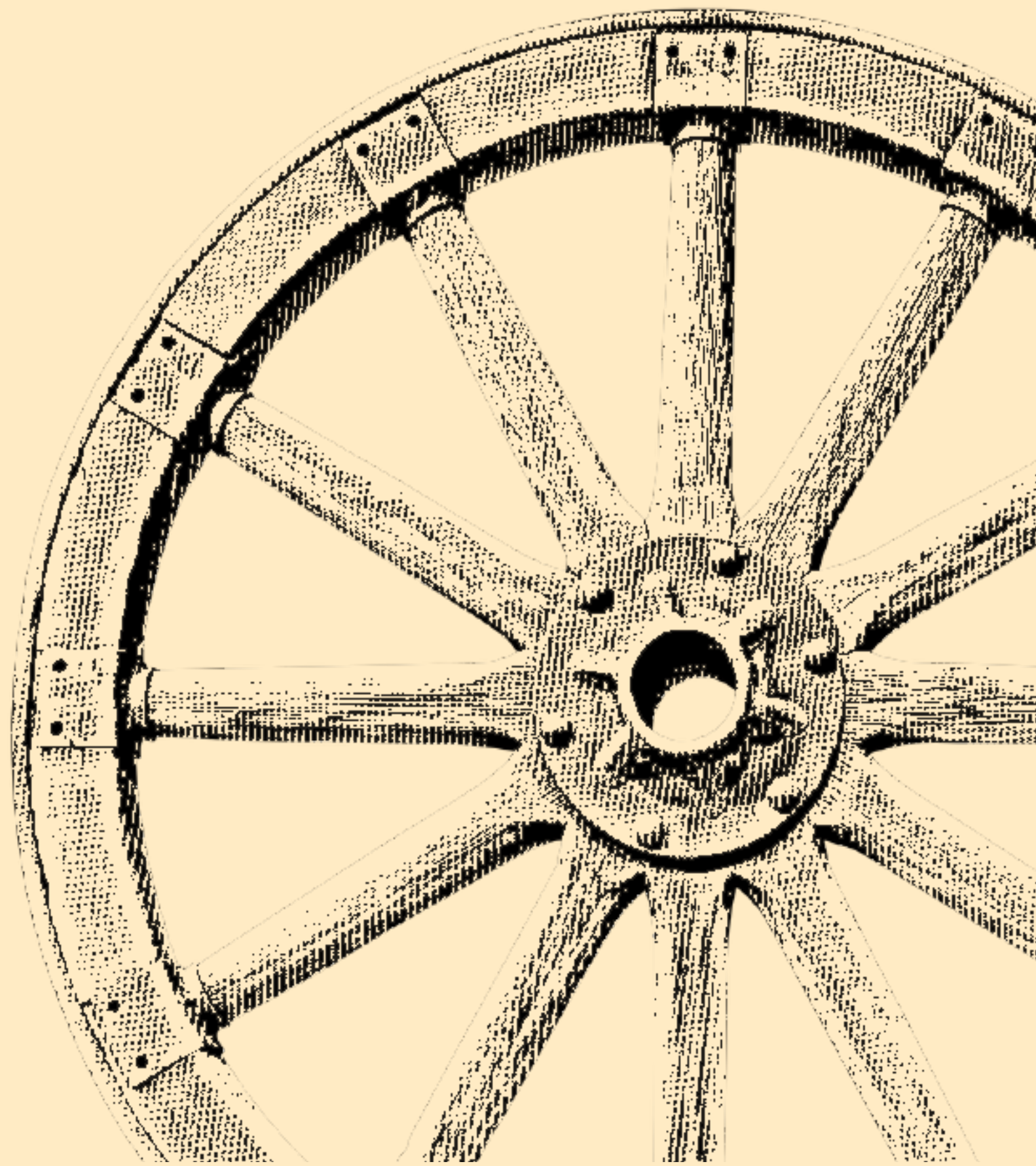


## GO FIGURE

BY CHARLES BERNSTEIN

Translation precedes poetry. In other's words interpretation's not the end of criticism but a place for art. Meanings follow utterance hoping for one more chance at bat. (Poetry written as affirmation will never acknowledge apostasy.) Interpretation like translation can be wrong — but you won't know till the crying starts. Dark's part light, it's just you can't see it. (We keep reinventing the wheel because we're stuck.) If critics didn't exist, we would have to invent them. Piety's impious. Not agency: adjacency.

for Marjorie Perloff at 90



## HOW MANY SYLLABLES, MARIO?

BY CHARLES BERNSTEIN

There's got to be more to it  
Than this, or a lot less, because  
Otherwise it don't add up  
(I know I've said it before)  
And guess who's left holding the  
Bag?, not my bag. I've chased  
That dream to the other side of  
Kingdom Came (tuned in a  
Few Minutes late and failed to  
Register under my own name)

for Robert Downey  
June 24, 1936 – July 7, 2021

## DEATH &amp; THE PENGUIN

BY ANDREI KURKOV

**1**  
First, a stone landed a metre from Viktor's foot. He glanced back. Two louts stood grinning, one of whom stooped, picked up another from a section of broken cobble, and bowled it at him skittler-fashion. Viktor made off at something approaching a racing walk and rounded the corner, telling himself the main thing was not to run. He paused outside his block, glancing up at the hanging clock: 9:00. Not a sound. No one about. He went in, now no longer afraid. They found life dull, ordinary people, now that entertainment was beyond their means. So as bowled cobbles.

As he turned on the kitchen light, it went off again. They had cut the power, just like that. And in the darkness he became aware of the unhurried footfalls of Misha the penguin.

Misha had appeared chez Viktor a year before, he had been feeling lonely. But Misha had brought his own kind of loneliness, and the result was now two complementary loneliness, creating an impression more of interdependence than of amity.

Unearthing a candle, he lit it and stood it on the table in an empty mayonnaise pot. The poetic insouciance of the tiny light sent him to look, in the semi-darkness, for pen and paper. He sat down at the table with the paper between him and the candle; paper asking to be written on. Had he been a poet, rhyme would have raced across the white. But he wasn't. He was trapped in a rut between journalism and meagre scraps of prose. Short stories were the best he could do. Very short to make a living from, even if he got paid for them.

A shot rang out.

Darting to the window, Viktor pressed his face to the glass. Nothing. He returned to his sheet of paper. Already he had thought up a story around that shot. A single side was all it took; no more, no less. And as his latest short story drew to its tragic close, the power came back on and the ceiling bulb blazed.

Blowing out the candle, he fetched coley from the freezer for Misha's bowl.



**2**  
Next morning, when he had typed his latest short short story and taken leave of Misha, Viktor set off for the office of a new fat newspaper that generously published anything, from a cooking recipe to a review of post-Soviet theatre. He knew the Editor, having occasionally drunk with him, and been driven home by a driver afterwards.

The Editor received him with a smile and a slap on the shoulder, told his secretary to make coffee, and there and then gave Viktor's offering a professional read.

"No, old friend," he said eventually. "Don't take it amiss, but it's a no go. Needs a spot more gore, or a kinky love angle. Get it into your head that sensation's the essence of a newspaper short story."

Viktor left, without waiting for coffee.

A short step away were the offices of Capital News, where, lacking editorial access, he looked in on the Arts section.

"Literature's not actually what we publish," the elderly Assistant Editor informed him amiably. "But leave it with me. Anything's possible. It might get in on a Friday. You know - for balance. If there's a glut of bad news, readers look for something neutral. I'll read it."

Ridding himself of Viktor by handing him his card, the little old man returned to his paper-piled desk. At which point it dawned on Viktor that he had not actually been asked in. The whole exchange had been conducted in the doorway.



**3**  
Two days later the phone rang.

"Capital News. Sorry to trouble you," said a crisp, clear female voice. "I have the Editor-in-Chief on the line."

The receiver changed hands. "Viktor Alekseyevich?" a man's voice enquired. "Couldn't pop in today, could you? Or are you busy?"

"No," said Viktor.

"I'll send a car. Blue Zhiguli. Just let me have your address."

Viktor did, and with a "Bye, then," the Editor-in-Chief rang off without giving his name. Selecting a shirt from the wardrobe, Viktor wondered if it was to do with his story. Hardly...

What was his story to tell them? Still what the hell!

The driver of the blue Zhiguli parked at the entrance was deferential. He it was who conducted

Viktor to the Editor-in-Chief.

"I'm Igor Lvovich," he said, extending a hand. "Glad to meet you."

He looked more like an aged athlete of a man than a man of the Press. And maybe that's how it was, except that his eyes betrayed a hint of irony born more of intellect and education than lengthy sessions in a gym.

"Have a seat. Spot of cognac?" He accompanied these words with a lordly wave of the hand.

"I'd prefer coffee, if I may," said Viktor, settling into a leather armchair facing the vast executive desk.

"Two coffees," the Editor-in-Chief said, picking up the phone.

"Do you know," he resumed amiably, "we'd only recently been talking about you, and yesterday in game out Assistant Arts Editor, Boris Leondarovich, with your little story. 'Get an eyeful of this,' said he. I did, and it's good. And then it came to me why we'd been talking about you, and I thought we should meet." Viktor nodded politely. Igor Lvovich paused and smiled.

"Viktor Alekseyevich," he resumed, "how about working for us?"

"Writing what?" asked Viktor, secretly alarmed at the prospect of the fresh spell of journalistic hard labour.

Igor Lvovich was on the point of explaining when the secretary came in with their coffee and a bowl of sugar on a tray, and he held his breath until she had gone. "This is highly confidential," he

said. "What we're after is a gifted obituarist, master of the succinct. Snappy, pithy, way-out stuff's the idea. You with me?" He looked hopefully at Viktor.

"Sit in an office, you mean, and wait for deaths?" Viktor asked warily, as if fearing to hear as much confirmed.

"No, of course not! Far more interesting and responsible than that! What you'd have to do is create, from scratch, an index of obelisk jobs - as we call obituaries - to include deputies and gangsters,

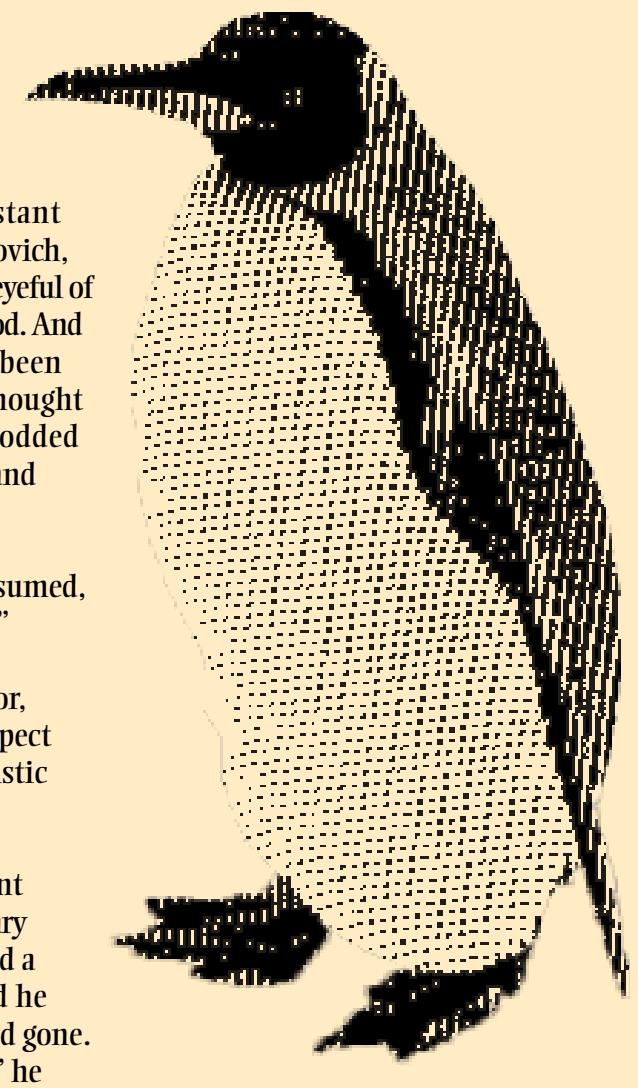
down to the cultural scene - that sort of person - while they're still alive. But what I want is the dead written about as they've never been written about before. And your story tells me you're the man."

"What about payment?"

"You'd start at \$300. Hours up to you. But keeping me informed, of course, who we've got carded. So we don't get caught with our pants down by some car crash out of the blue! Oh, and one other condition: you'll need a pseudonym. In your own interest as much as anything."

"But what?" said Viktor, half to himself.

"Think of one. But if you can't make it A Group of Friends for the time being," Viktor nodded.





## LA DEDUCCIÓN (CUENTO)

BY LUISA VALENZUELA

TRANSLATED BY PABLO DALER

As long as I keep the secret I hope I'll be safe. Pretty safe at least. But the secret is burning me.

It is true that Leonardo's death devastated me, clouded my brain, left me speechless. But I am getting them back, the words, that is; and the brain and everything that this implies. And now I understand. I know the reason for his death, I know, I understand everything, and I also understand that if it is known that I know, my life is in danger. My ordinary life with all its troubles and its good measure of joy.

Joys like our quasi daily talks with Leonardo, even though a thousand nautical miles separated us --they were much less and not nautical, but that is beside the point--. We talked on the phone at length and lost ourselves in a sea of laughs --hence the nautical miles-- and we played at being writers. In fact, we are - we were - writers. He much more renowned than me. Leonardo Walsh Elguín, of international fame; and because of that, his death a couple of months ago got so much attention in the media. Even I was able to find out about it here in my refuge in the woods on the shores of the boisterous Paraná despite having lost contact with him a couple of weeks earlier. Clumsy of me. The night before my departure in the last minute rush, I knocked over the water bottle on the bedside table and there laid, drowned, my poor cell phone. Following the expected fury, indignation, and helplessness I told myself that my wise, although contemptible unconscious had freed me from temptation. If I was going to spend a month in the woods to write in peace, it was better not to have at hand that weapon of mass distraction.

Of course I warned Leo. I sent him an email telling him about the mishap, in a few words.

Leo understood perfectly. Perhaps he even felt relieved, he knew I was going to take refuge in a beautiful (we did not know that yet) cabin without wife and that for a month we would give our verbal games some rest.

The last one, our favorite game, had a name: "The conspiranoia." The delusions of those who see conspiracies at every turn caused us uncontrollable laughter and we riffed about it and kept pondering nonsense on the phone until the wee hours of the night.

Now I am struck by nostalgia for the Conspiranoia game that is no longer such, because thanks to that precise game I know that Leo did not commit suicide or had an accident as alleged by the newspapers and experts and other liars. I know it was murder.

And now I am here, locked up as they say in the vastness of the woods and watching the mighty river run, knowing on my part, that running, what one would call running, I cannot do in any direction. Wherever I go the powers that killed Leo will kill me. They have all the resources of extermination at their fingertips, they are the masters of the world, and mine would be an insignificant case to which no one would pay attention, even easier than killing Leonardo Walsh Elguín, that latent threat.

What is the truth, what is the contingency?



And what does it matter in these times of pure confusion? One person's fantasies alone could expose the complex Machiavellianisms of the great powers. It was not a question of taking risks, that's why, goodbye writer; long absent, soon forgotten. But I do remember your manuscripts.

And now, here I am, producing another. Another hot manuscript.

I have no choice.

Although I know that I will not show it to anyone, I will not dare to even reread it once the narration of the events conveniently converted into a novel is completed. I do not know what I will do with this but I will do something, at least not destroy it. One day this will have to come to light, and if only I were

brave ... if only certainty did not weigh so heavily on me.

I'm beating around the bush. I procrastinate.

Writing is my way of being in the world and perhaps these pages end up being the last thing I write. That's why I hit the keys and get cracking, before they decide to get into my files. There is no wifi here, no connection whatsoever. If I want to get in touch, I must go to Oberá, about thirty kilometers away, but that doesn't deter them. They are the masters of the networks. The social networks; that dazzling, necessary Nemesis.

Let's see.

This is right up our alley, but Leo is gone.

Who among those who knew him well could believe that he on his own went up to the terrace of his building almost at dawn and climbed on the railing? They say it was to splice the wifi cable that was actually cut (but who would cut it, I wonder), and then reconnect it himself, he... who was never interested in technology. Or who can believe that he climbed on the railing to commit suicide for who knows what romantic sorrows he never shared?

No, ladies and gentlemen, it wasn't that, nothing like that.

His hot manuscript has supposedly never been found and I know that at some point he wrote it, or at least made notes, took notes, as he used to. His family rescued the manuscripts, found the gold medals for the awards, the old unpublished novel, short stories and the occasional poem and various notes, many, but in reference to the manuscript that I am thinking about, not a word. An innocent death to cover the other, rather the answer to the other: when the famous Prosecutor died, pandemonium was unleashed.

The hot manuscript was not, apparently, in Leo's house, not among his papers (he used to take notes by hand), not in the memory of his computer. But his killers had plenty of time to make sure no traces were left.

Poor Leo's body had fallen into the airshaft of the building. It was only discovered at noon. The forensic doctors decreed suicide. How ironic.

They found traces of alcohol in his blood, but nothing excessive. It's the ketamine story that doesn't sound right, doesn't sound right at all. Ketamine nonetheless, the drug that we learned produces pleasant hallucinations but also reduces the will without affecting muscle tone.

We learned about the effects of that drug, at least laymen like Leo or me who had never heard of it before, thanks to the phony investigation around the death of the famous prosecutor supposedly assassinated by the government at that time.

That did give us material to wonder. It was thanks to that case that our Conspiranoia game was born, although the name would come up later.

The game lasted for months. Sometimes he thought it had been murder and I suicide; the next time we exchanged roles. The trick consisted in trying to figure out how to carry out a possible murder in that location, inaccessible from the outside.

And then one day we hit the nail on the head. We understood everything. And now I don't know where to go. I won't be safe anywhere in the world if I make known what we discovered, what I will write when I get up the nerve because I know I must. Not only does Leo deserve it, humanity deserves to know for sure what it undoubtedly already suspects, and with good reason. Although this might be just the tip of the iceberg, or rather one more layer of the eternal onion. I remember the words of Inspector Laurenzi. "Never try to get to the bottom of the truth, of any truth. The truth is like an onion: you remove one layer, then another, and when you remove the last one, you have nothing left." But Laurenzi is a fictional Inspector, created by that other genius named Walsh.

My endeavor also seems like fiction, as if I had caught the conspiranoia. But Leonardo's death, inconceivable if we think of accident or suicide as suggested by the press, set off the alarm.

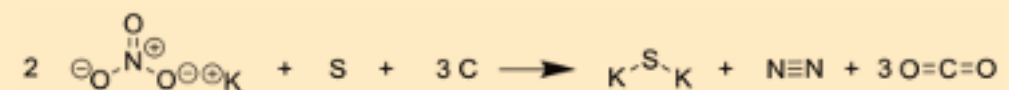
And now I get right to the heart of the matter. It is not a premonition or clairvoyance, just grasping what is floating in the air.

And I must hurry, before they find me.

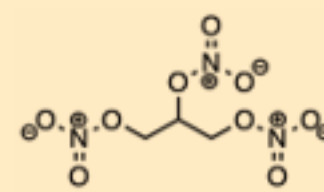
## QUIMOSABE

BY KAREN YAMASHITA

**Abstract 1**  
**Smokeless Gunpowder**  
**Chemistry in Pyrotechnic**  
**Apparition Revisualization**  
**of Ghosts**



Round about 1864, California Powder Works situated itself on the San Lorenzo River, three miles upstream of the town of Santa Cruz. Here they built a dam with a tunnel, 4 by 6 feet in diameter and 1200 feet through a granite ridge, with a 60-foot drop-off, to power the mill's machinery. They commenced charring willow, madrone, and alder, fueling the fire with redwood, all in abundance in that dense forest. They also built a bridge over the San Lorenzo and a wharf on the Santa Cruz beach to receive shipments of saltpeter from the Atacama desert in Chile and sulfur from the Italian island of Sicily. All of this got pulverized to make black powder, by weight: 75% potassium nitrate, 15% charcoal, and 10% sulfur. In the day, west of the Rockies and the Civil War, California Powder Works was the first supplier of gunpowder.



Then, in 1867, Alfred Nobel, known to you today for the Nobel Peace Prize, invented dynamite by using diatomaceous earth, composed of siliceous diatom shells and unicellular aquatic plants of microscopic size, to absorb nitroglycerin. Giant Powder in San Francisco got exclusive rights to produce Nobel's dynamite, but by 1874, Joseph W. Willard, superintendent of the California Powder Works, had basically copied Nobel's formula to produce Hercules Powder. Behind Willard was the DuPont family, long in the gunpowder business, having established a 43% interest in the works. Then too, William Charles Peyton, son of second superintendent Bernard Peyton, married Anna Ridgley du

Pont. It was William Peyton who patented Peyton Powder, a version of a clean-burning smokeless gunpowder, employing a mixture of nitroglycerine and nitrocellulose with ammonium picrate.

Now you need to understand that dynamite and smokeless powder using nitroglycerine was a step

up from the old black powder. California Powder Works went on to produce high explosive powder for the US Army and Navy and to operate a proving ground to test rifles and cannons. In 1881, they opened a new plant in Hercules, off the San Pablo Bay, and after 1906, operated under the name DuPont. The DuPonts had worked their way west across the country from the Eleutherian Mills on Brandywine Creek in Delaware to the California Gold Rush, via the Transcontinental Railroad, and, not to forget, four wars -- 1812, Crimean, Civil, and Spanish-American. By 1907, Dupont had acquired some 108 competitors. Someone said that in the day, if you were in the business of explosives, you had one of three fates: dissolution by catastrophic accident, elimination by competition, or assimilation by DuPont.

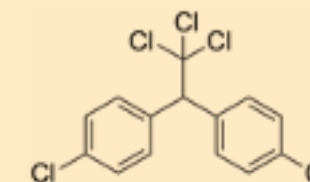
Not to be owning the narrative; no nothing like that, but this brings me to the point of this local history. On April 26, 1898, at 5:15 pm, thirteen of us workers got blown to bits: Guy Seward Fagen, 16; Charles Miller, 16, and his brother James E. Miller, 27; Luther W. Marshall, 18, and his brother Ernest Marshall, 19; Benjamin E. Joseph, 19; Ernest Jennings, 21; Henry C. Butler, 45; and Charles A. Cole, 51. These nine were buried together in the Santa Cruz Memorial Cemetery, that is, if you could retrieve the body parts. A few of us were recognizable, but they said, the rest of us *could fit into a hat*. A year later, they were still finding our body parts in the trees. Three unnamed men were buried elsewhere. Then there's me, whose name and remains just plain evaporated. Where in God's name did I go?

In about fifty years of operations, there were maybe 50 explosions. That's right, an average of one per year. The human catastrophic percentage is a bit better: some

thirty-five men among us died in those explosions. It was a hazard of the business, and we were the collateral damages. In 1914, the operation was shut down, buildings dismantled; the old community -- workers' houses, school, shops, Peyton family mansions -- all abandoned until, a decade later, the Freemasons turned the 138-acre site into Paradise Park, a club with campsites. To be sure, if you wander the old ruins, you'll catch sight of us, bits and pieces, glimmers. Me, I'm scattered everywhere, not just into thin air, but bio-molecularly into everything -- air, water, soil, flora, and fauna. My cellular memory wanders this place, travels and invades everything. Hey, think about it. Not to make you feel anxious or anything, but some piece of me might be traveling inside of you, right now as we speak.



**Abstract 2**  
**Lipophilic Properties of**  
**Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane**  
**and Bioaccumulation:**  
**Kryptonite to Mosquitoes or**  
**Toxic Colonialism?**



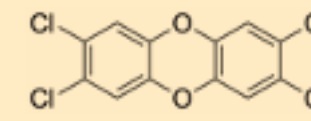
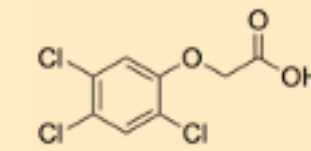
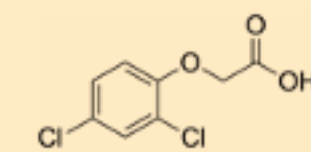
In 1939, a Swiss chemist named Pauly Mueller, working for J.R. Geigy in Basel, figured that there were chemicals exclusively toxic to insects and discovered that the compound 1,1,1-trichloro-2,2-bis(4-chlorophenyl)ethane was effective against a wide range of arthropods: mosquito, louse, flea, sandfly. Thus, it was possible, through insects, to get to the routes of malaria, typhus, the plague, and various other tropical diseases. Now what they meant by "exclusively toxic" I'm not sure, but this modern synthetic insecticide was used to great effect by the US Army in WWII as it advanced from Pacific island to island, taking Guam, the Philippines, Okinawa, Korea, and finally, Japan. Dusted the heck out of those tropical huts and hideouts, and virtually eliminated those bloodsuckers. Dusted the infantry too. Under the armpits, down

the crotch. Said it was chemistry that would win this war. For this, Mueller got the Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine; the committee declared: *DDT has been used in large quantities in the evacuation of concentration camps, of prisons and deportees. Without any doubt, the material has already preserved the life and health of hundreds of thousands.*

And when the war ended, the miracles of chemical treatment were brought home to American agriculture to increase the yields of fruit, vegetables, cotton, and livestock, and to protect farm buildings, stored grain, greenhouse crops, shade trees and ornamentals. And in the day, what suburban American household didn't have one of those pump canisters to spray away aphids on roses or clear a campsite of mosquitoes, fire ants, and ticks? As advertised: *Better things for better living through chemistry.*



**Abstract 3**  
**2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic acid: Biomonitoring**  
**Epidemiological Exposure and**  
**Evolutionary Resistance on**  
**General Populations**



In 1943, Arthur Galston, a graduate student at the University of Illinois, studying plant hormones and the flowering of soybeans, discovered that low concentrations of the compound 2,3,5-triiodobenzoic acid encouraged flowering; however high levels caused abscission, that is, plant death. You never know how others will use your dissertation research, and Galston later realized that Monsanto and Dow Chemical, under the auspices of the US military, developed that compound,



not for flowering but, deflowering. In the next war, guys flew our planes over Vietnam and Laos ejecting Agent Orange and dousing the hell out of those dense tropical forests. Maybe we exposed the enemy, but like Galston warned, ol' Orange was a double agent.



**Abstract 4**  
**Hydrophobia in**  
**Polytetrafluoroethylene**

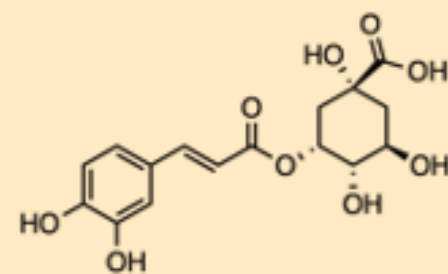


In 1938, Roy Plunkett, experimenting with tetrafluoroethylene gas at the DuPont Jackson Laboratory, created by accident a waxy white stuff that turned out to be the most slippery substance known to mankind. It was also non-corrosive, chemically stable, with an extremely high melting point, and repellent. Plunkett accidentally invented Teflon.

Years later, Julia Child, the French Chef, switched from cast-iron to what she called no-stick-ums for crepes, scrambled eggs, pancakes, and omelets. When asked about her favorite frying pan, turned out it was a 10-inch aluminum *Weaver*. *You get it at the hardware store, she said. It's perfect for omelets. I could*



*not live without that.*  
**Abstract 5**  
**Mammary Carcinoma:**  
**Rogue Reactivity Strawberry**  
**Extract Apoptosis Tumor**  
**Inhibition in Mice**



As the crow flies, a mile southwest of Paradise Park, you can locate a

hillside garden in the redwood forest of the university. In 1967, an English master gardener named Alan Chadwick employed what he called the biodynamic French intensive method, and with shovels and hoes, he and student volunteers terraced that hill into a garden of flowers, herbs, vegetables, and fruit trees. This experiment grew into the UCSC Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems. From this, you can find local connections to organic markets, mushroom foraging, food activism, and cuisine using locally grown ingredients.

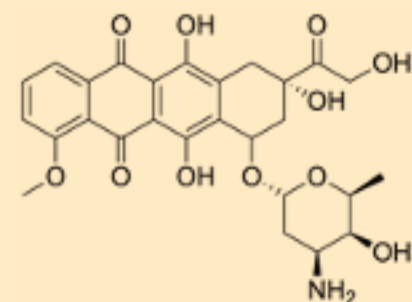
In 1962, Rachel Carson, a marine biologist known for her writings on the ecosystems of the sea, published *Silent Spring*, warning of the misuse and dangers of synthetic chemical pesticides, provoking fierce controversy from the industry, and launching our contemporary environmental movement. Carson challenged scientists and government to see the natural world as shared living space, speaking calmly while weathering corporate threats and accusations. Two years later, at age 57, Carson died from breast cancer. In 2016, the Helen and Bill Webster Foundation gifted UCSC College Eight with a proper name, Rachel Carson College.

In the same year, 2016, the California Department of Pesticide Regulation reported that more than 1.54 million pounds of pesticides, principally soil fumigants and nematicides, chloropicrin and dichloropropene, were sprayed on crops in Santa Cruz County, half of which were strawberry fields. In November 2014, using an air monitoring device called a Drift Catcher, Emily Marquez and Susan Kegley collected drift samples at a Watsonville residence adjacent to from two chloropicrin applications on two fields, stating: *Estimated exposure scenarios spanning a lifetime, 30 years, or various periods of childhood all resulted in cancer risks exceeding EPA's level of concern of one excess cancer per million people.* In plain language, this means that if residents, farm workers -- seasonal and migrant, breath in what the drift catches, they are at risk for numerous forms of cancer, lymphomas and prostate, brain, leukemia, cervix, and stomach cancers.

Meanwhile, researchers have discovered that anthocyanin and phenolic acids in strawberries inhibit the growth and spread of cancer cells.



**Abstract 6**  
**Doxorubicin Adriamycin: Red**  
**Devil Extraction from Soil**  
**Fungus Streptomyces**

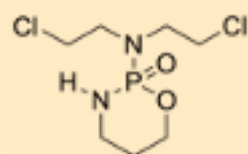


In the 1950s, an Italian research lab, Farmitalia, isolated *Streptomyces peucetius* from a soil sample near the 13th century Castel del Monte, producing a red pigment and antibiotic effective against tumors in mice. A strain of *Streptomyces* was mutated using N-nitroso-N-methyl urethane. The eventual result was Doxorubicin, known to cancer patients as the Red Devil and approved for medical use in the US in 1974.

That's the Red Devil, but what happened to the headhunter's serum? In 1931, an American doctor, Wilburn Ferguson, set out for Peru and spent the next few decades studying rainforest plants, searching for new drugs for incurable diseases. While studying the Jivaro tribe and their practice of head-hunting and head-shrinking, Ferguson researched, in particular, a secret and toxic herbal solution of thirty plant juices used to cook and preserve the heads. Extracting elements from this solution, he produced an anticancer formula named Amitosin which he reported successfully treated terminally ill cancer patients. The drug never received US government approval; however, Sean Connery starred in and made a movie based on Ferguson, *The Medicine Man*. In the movie, Connery's assistant simply injects the indigenous patient with serum, and the next day, no tumor; he's cured.



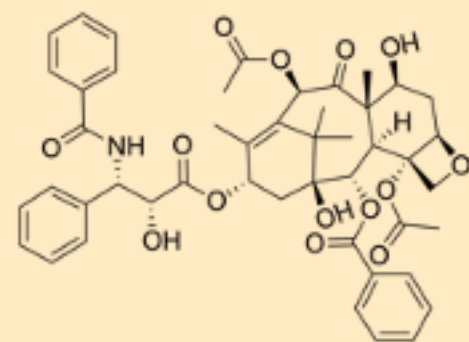
**Abstract 7**  
**Toasting AC-T Cocktails:**  
**Warfare Nitrogen Mustards and**  
**Peacetime Cyclophosphamide**  
**Therapeutic Regimes**



In December 1943, Germans bombed the Italian port of Bari on the Adriatic coast, destroying the US Liberty ship John Harvey. As it turned out, the John Harvey carried a secret cargo 2000 bombs of M47A1 mustard gas. Most of crewmates died in the blast, but some jumped ship into a sea of oil. Turned out it was mustard oil, and 628 patients, including medical staff and hundreds of Italian citizens, sought treatment for mysterious symptoms linked to gas poisoning. Examination of tissue samples from autopsied victims confirmed the research of Alfred Gilman and Louis Goodman at Yale studying nitrogen mustards for the treatment of lymphoma. Eventually they created the first intravenous chemotherapy drug: chlormethine or mechlorethamine.



**Abstract 8**  
**Taxology of the Pacific**  
**Yew: Taxus Brevifolia's**  
**Intravenous Journey**



The story of the Pacific yew or *taxus brevifolia* was written by Jerry Rust and Hal Hartzell in a self-published book in 1983. Rust ran for governor of Oregon on an environmental platform focused on the preservation of the yew. Everything you want to know about the yew -- its biology, its relationship to forest ecology, and its human contact history -- was written in this book. Since only 500 copies were

printed, only 500 readers learned this version of the Pacific yew, but that deeply reverent tree biography reflects the resonating story driving the conservation movement to save old growth forests in the Pacific Northwest. The Pacific yew along with the spotted owl were losing their habitats and in danger of becoming extinct.

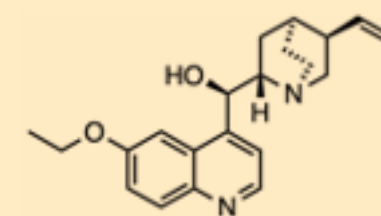
The Pacific yew is an evergreen conifer found along the Pacific coast from southern Alaska to Central California. Its needles are short and flat, dark green on top, light green beneath. The seeds develop into small red berries, and the bark is a patchwork of peeling brown and grey scales over a smoother inner layer of purple and red-brown. In nature, color attracts but also might be a warning. The yew is poisonous. In the old days, it was known as the "graveyard tree."

In 1964, Monroe Wall and Mansukh Wani at Research Triangle Institute in North Carolina, discovered that extracts from the bark contained cytotoxic activity. For the next three decades, thousands of pounds of bark were harvested from the Pacific yew for cancer research. The problem was that the preferred species, the Pacific yew, was slow-growing and hidden in the understory of old growth forests. Considered a weed tree, it was usually trashed and burned in the process of clearcutting, but when the Pacific yew became valuable in the search to cure cancer, everything changed. The calculated estimate was six yew trees per cancer patient. Do we destroy the forest to cure cancer?

On August 7, 1992, the yew got its own congressional act: The Pacific Yew Act, with the purpose of insuring the conservation and sustainable harvest of Pacific yew trees, located on lands of the National Forest System and on public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, for the successful treatment of cancer. But by this time, researchers at Bristol-Myers Squibb developed a way to semi-synthesize the chemical paclitaxel from the common Canadian yew, *taxus baccata*, which could be cultivated commercially, thus saving the endangered Pacific yew.



**Addendum**  
**War on Drugs/ War on**  
**Cancer: Designer Receptors**  
**Exclusively Activated by**  
**Designer Drugs (DREADD)**  
**Suppression of Intuitive**  
**Toxicological Binary**  
**Contradictions**



The National Cancer Act was signed into law in 1971. President Richard Nixon described this commitment to establish the National Cancer Institute as a "war on cancer."

Common chemotherapy drug side effects: pain at site of infusion, eyes watering, red to pink urine, darkening of nail beds, darkening of skin, problems with fertility, low blood counts, blood cancer, tumor lysis syndrome, poor appetite, bladder irritation and bleeding, hair loss, arthralgias and myalgias, peripheral neuropathy, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, mouth sores, hypersensitivity reactions -- fever, facial flushing, chills, shortness of breath, or hives.



**Author note:**  
In January 2020, I consulted oncologist, Dr. Amy McMullen, about my breast cancer. Flanked by my husband and sister, we had a silent agreement. Depending, we were going to spend the wad traveling, wherever, didn't matter. But then Dr. McMullen said confidently, *We can cure this.* I thought okay, why not, a new experience being cured. I know my sister privately studied it, but I had no interest in the science. I just thought they should prove it by doing it. I had other things to do, like write. I joined the program and followed it obediently. Started chemo treatments, lost my hair and appetite, got sick, then rallied for the next chemo.

By the third chemo, the entire world shut down in pandemic, joining me in isolation, quarantine mode. My eight chemo-room buddies

on La-Z-Boys in various stages of intravenous pumping were suddenly gone, banned in social distancing. For the rest of these procedures, I sat alone for hours watching the intravenous drip dripping of pre-anti-nausea meds, then Red Devil or AC-T or Taxol. I missed the commotion of my cancer companions, especially since I had started writing a sitcom called *The Chemo Room*. What happened to Nurse Rachel, to Fred, Sophia, and Gilbert?

I watched Nurse Mia or Nurse Hillary pump me with the red stuff. Then there was Taxol, which required ice packs on my feet and hands to prevent neuropathy. Finally, I asked, *What is this stuff anyway?* Mia gave me the lounge copy of a book about the story of Taxol. Honestly, I didn't understand most of it, but I did understand that whatever a research lab had invented to kill, it was also involved in research of the same stuff to save. Maybe the labs were different, but they were really all the same, in cahoots, and that is how I drifted off to sleep on the La-Z-Boy, dreaming into my complicity, the contradiction of my living and possible dying.

PS: Infinite gratitude to: Dr. Thanh Vu; Dr. Kenneth Averill; Dr. Amy McMullen; Alice McCurdy, Physician's Assistant; Nurse Rachel; Nurse Mia; Nurse Hillary; Dr. Jessica Santillano; Tea Taylor, Lymphedema Therapist; Lilinoe Manischalchi, Hand Therapist; Dr. Charlotte Kim; your staffs and support teams.



**Acknowledgement:** Chemical structures by Rachel Snelling, Ph.D.

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## THE STREET'S KISS

BY LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI

The trouble with the printed word is it is so silent. Let poetry return to its first purpose—the oral message. Let there be a law against writing poetry; it should be spoken, then recorded.

The modern urban poetic imagination has come to resemble a shrunk head. Let's blow it up with a bagpipe for bellows.

Poetry is the shook foil of the imagination. It should shine out and half blind you. A poem is a mirror walking down a strange street.

Poetry is music forced through a fire hose.

Poetry is made by dissolving halos in the ocean of sound.

Poetry is the street talk of angels and devils.

Poetry is the excavation of forgotten kingdoms where nude beauties lie amorous and waiting for the touch that will fully awaken them.

Poetry is a sofa full of blind singers who have put aside their canes.

Poetry is the anarchy of the senses making sense.

Poetry is a voice of dissent against the waste of words and the sad plethora of print.

Poetry is what exists between the lines.

Poetry is made with the syllables of dreams yet the dreamer is usually a bad poet.

Poetry is not a aserving of the sound ropes; it is a knotting of them.

Poetry is a lighthouse moving its megaphone over the sea.

Poetry is the semen of swans coupling in air.

Poetry is a picture of Ma in her Woolworth bra looking out a window into a secret garden.

Poetry is an Arab varying colored rugs and birdcages through the streets of a great metropolis.

What is handier than a poem? It can be made out of common household ingredients. It fits on a single page, uet it can fill a world and can be carried in the pocket of a heart.

Bad poetry is just as bad in any language. Yet, bad translations sometimes make good poetry out of bad.

Poetry is pillow thought after intercourse.

The poet is a street singer who rescues the alleycats of love.

Poetry is the distillation of articulate animals calling to each other over a great gulf fat off at dawn.

Poetry is the dialogue of statues.

Poetry is the sound of summer in the rain and of people laughing behind closed shutters down a narrow street.

Poetry is the incomparable lyric intelligence brought to bear upon fifty-seven varieties of experience.

Dylan Thomas said there are only two kinds of poetry, loud and soft. Let the poet open his mouth and say absolute things. Don't mumble.

Poetry is a high house echoing with all the voices that ever said anything crazy or wonderful.

Poetry is a subversive raid upon the forgotten language of the collective unconscious.

Poetry is the sound of a flute played in a glorious outhouse.

Poetry is the shadow cast by our streetlight imaginations.

Poetry is a hermaphrodite wearing glass pants and gray brasseries and cycling through the southland of our dreams.

Poetry is only indientelly concerned with the disorder of the human spirit.

Poetry should be the record of our unburied life.

Poetry is made of night thoughts. If it can tear itself away from illusion, it will not be disowned before dawn.

Poetry is made by evaporating the liquid laughter of youth.

Poetry is the final gestalt of the imagination.

One cannot drink the star at the bottom of the glass, but poetry should try it.

Poetry should be emotion recollected in emotion.

Poetry should be the I speaking directly to you.

Poetry should be the call of grown children in a great wood.

Woods are living fossils. The poet should piece the life beast together.

A poet is only as great as his ear. Too bad if it is tin.

The dove descending breaks the air, hungry for the street's kiss. So should the poet descend to hear life as it is spoken in the world's secret streets.

Away with the esoteric. Let the poet be a singing animal turned pimp for an anarchist king.

The poem strained through a bedsheet is only half a poem.

The poet mixes drinks out of the insane liquors of the imagination and is perpetually surprised that no one staggers.

The poet should be a dark barker before the tents of existence.

Our soft flesh faints upon the bone. Poetry is just as perishable if it is soft. Poetry is what can be heard at manholes echoing up from Dante's fire escape.

The poet must have wide angle vision, each look at worldglance. Yet the foreground, with his own body in it, must be in detail.

Poetry is the real subject of great prose.

Who is there to play the disk of life on the turning phono of the world if the poet does not? Stop and listen. The rest is silence.

The typography of a modern poem should be in the open-form style of action painting. The configuration of the words on the page an explicit configuration of what the poem says.

Out of a cloud fell a pony. And so began haiku.

Do not worry about other poets stealing your poetic thunder. If yours is lightning, the thunder is bound to follow.

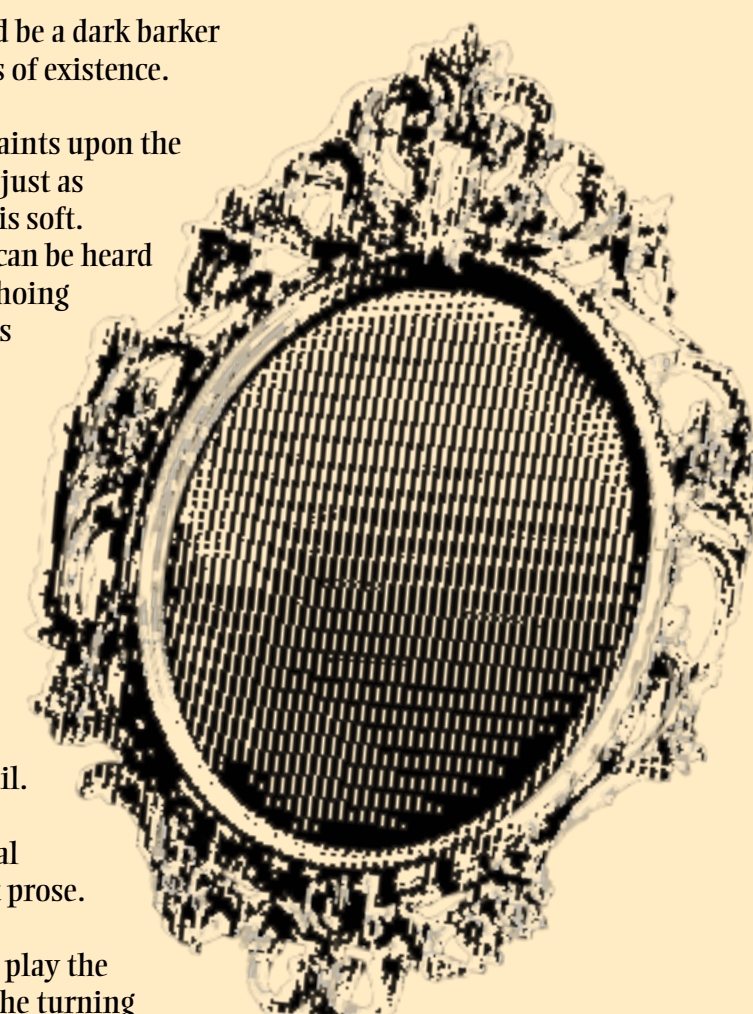
A poet can be an orator. He can use a soapbox style to make himself heard over the static. But try to mount the box without the soap.

Each poem should be a momentary madness, and the unreal is realist.

The upper middle class has long ago entered the last days of the Roman Empire. The poet must be the real barbarian descending on society, moving continually downward not upward in it and saying what he hears with his ear to the ground.

Poetry is not all heroin, horses, and Rimbaud. It is also the whisper of elephants and the shouting of ants under a doorstep at night.

A poem is its own Coney Island of the mind, its own circle of the soul, its own Far Rockaway of the heart.



## ABOUT THE WRITERS

### MARK AXELROD

Mark Axelrod is a graduate of both Indiana University and the University of Minnesota. He has been the Director of the John Fowles Center for Creative Writing for which he has received five National Endowment for the Arts Grants. He has received numerous writing awards including two United Kingdom Leverhulme Fellowships for Creative Writing as well as screenwriting awards from the Sundance Institute, the WGA East, and the Nicholl Fellowship. He recently received awards from the Irvine International Film Festival, the Chicago International Film Festival and the Illinois International Film Festival for his screenplays.

### KNUT HAMSNUN

Knut Hamsun was a Norwegian writer whose work spans over 70 years. He published more than 20 novels, a collection of poetry, short stories, and plays all surrounding perspective, subject, environment, and consciousness. Most notably, Hamsun was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1920 and is considered "one of the most influential and innovative literary stylists of the past hundred years."

### DACIA MARAINI

Dacia Maraini is an Italian writer whose work focuses on women's issues. She has written a number of novels and plays, having founded the del Porcospino theatrical company, promoting the production of new Italian plays. Maraini received awards including the Formentor Prize for *L'età del malessere*, the Premio Fregene for Isolina, the Premio Campiello and Book of the Year Award for *La lunga vita di Marianna Ucrìa*.

### CLAUDIO MAGRIS

Claudio Magris is an Italian writer, scholar, and critic. He was among the leading writers and cultural philosophers of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Magris served as senator for Friuli-Venezia Giulia from 1994 to 1996. Currently, he is an essayist and columnist for the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* along with other European publications.





## ABOUT THE WRITERS

## GIUSEPPE CONTE

Giuseppe Conte is an Italian writer whose work touches on themes and tones of civil poetry. He is an accomplished author with books such as *Le Stagioni* that won the Montale Prize and his novel *Il terzo ufficiale* which won the Hemingway Prize. Conte is known to be intrigued with Myth and as an avid traveler. Currently, he lives in San Remo.

## CHARLES BERNSTEIN

Charles Bernstein is an American poet, editor, essayist, and literary scholar. He is a founder and leading practitioner of Language poetry. Some of his accomplishments include being elected Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2006 and receiving the Bollingen Prize from Yale University, the premiere American prize for lifetime achievement in 2019. Currently, he is Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania.

## ANDREI KURKOV

Andrei Kurkov is a Ukrainian novelist whose work is currently translated from Russian into 37 languages and published in 65 countries. He is the author of 19 novels, including the bestselling *Death and the Penguin*, 9 children's books, and about 20 documentary, fiction, and TV movie scripts. Kurkov's work incorporates dark humor and focuses on post-Soviet reality and elements of surrealism.

## LUISA VALENZUELA

Luisa Valenzuela is an Argentine writer best known for her fiction and journalistic works. She is recognized as one of her country's most significant writers, having written in response to the dictatorship of the 1970s in Argentina. Valenzuela is distinguished in magical realism and her style is characterized by an experimental style which questions hierarchical social structures from a feminist perspective. Throughout her literary career, Valenzuela has focused on the themes of politics, language, and women.



## ABOUT THE WRITERS

## KAREN YAMASHITA

Karen Yamashita is a Japanese-American writer. Her works contain elements of magic realism, along with emphasize the necessity of multicultural communities in relation to borders and ethnic identity. In 2011 she was named a Fellow of United States Artists and is currently a Professor of Literature at University of California, Santa Cruz, where she teaches Asian American literature and creative writing.

## LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI

Lawrence Ferlinghetti was an American poet, painter, and social activist. He was the co-founder of City Lights Booksellers & Publishers and author of fiction, poetry, theater, and translations. Ferlinghetti was best known for *A Coney Island of the Mind* which has sold over a million copies. When he turned 100 years old, San Francisco referred to his birthday as "Lawrence Ferlinghetti Day."





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THE NEXT ISSUE IS  
DEVOTED TO

