

ADAM ROBISON AND
OTHER POEMS



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poems by

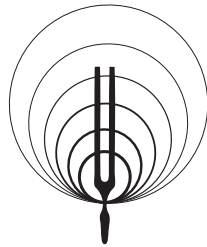
Adam Robinson

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Some of these poems are true and some are not. Some are real.



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for s. barber

I.

You wouldnt of been born at all.
What makes you say that?
Cause your mama's from San Angelo and he never would
of met her.
He'd of met somebody.
So would she.
So?
So you wouldnt of been born.
I dont see why you say that. I'd of been born somewheres.
How?
Well why not?

—Cormac McCarthy, *All the Pretty Horses*



Introduction

The Beauty of the Husband is an exegetical exege-poetic take on Keats's notion that beauty is truth. My story, this one, is also an inquiry about literature, but the literature in question is unspecified.

Another difference is that Anne Carson's so-called "tangos" are a work of so-called "fiction."

Whereas I'm writing about myself, and here I have the fake name "Adam Robison." It's disenchantingly meta, I'm afraid. It's like I'm Søren Kierkegaard for crying out loud. He wrote with numerous pseudonyms (Johannes Climacus for one, Anti-Climacus for another) and then edited them under his own name. In this way, *Fear and Trembling* is written by Johannes de Silentio.

Johannes the Seducer, too. Meantime, Adam Robinson is editing my book. To speak of a letter, the distinction is meted out to the *n*th degree.

Sometimes these experiments fail. Like, take for instance Vonnegut's novel, *Hocus Pocus*. It's broken down into sections in the same way that the narrator wrote it when he was in jail (if memory serves): onto napkins and matchbooks and the margins of other documents and so on. But come on, that's a game you can see right through.

Who should care how something was composed, on what paper? "No ideas but in things" is what I always say.

That I, Adam Robison, can parenthesize "if memory serves" suggests otherwise. In fact, that I can subject Vonnegut's text to my own memory supports Roland Barthes' contention that "the book itself is only a tissue of signs, an imitation that is lost, infinitely deferred." But memory cannot write in deference.

Own, ownership, property, propriety, proper. I thought I would distribute this in envelopes.

I mean, plus, it would be a simple matter to reread the beginning of *Hocus Pocus* for verification purposes. This is something I could do on the john.

Anti-Climacus, who “wrote” *The Sickness Unto Death*, said that “to defend something is to discredit it.” And from Francis Bacon—the philosopher, not the freaked-out painter—I got it that “Knowledge is Power.”

And from Noam Chomsky I got it that if it’s power, I don’t want it. Let’s work it out with Foucault, who (ladies and gentlemen) gave us *the author function*, which basically says that the author is less than the idea she puts forth into the metanarrative.

Which is a good thing for Anne Carson, who wrote *Decreation*, which makes no sense at all, unless you’re into hanging laundry.

Noam Chomsky gave us this sentence, which I love: Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.

I can’t remember why *Decreation* would make sense if you enjoy hanging up laundry. I could check.

Isn’t there a whole corpus of literature that is “found” somewhere? Like, *Frankenstein* was framed in a letter. Famous authors are often people who discover mysterious manuscripts in dusty attics. An “author” named “Donald Westlake” wrote a “story” called “No Story,” in which several “authors” “write” how they discovered what they’re about to relate, but in the end they relate nothing.

It telescopes.

In one story, John Barth opens quotes and inside those quotes more quotes and inside those quotes more quotes and inside those quotes more quotes and inside those quotes more quotes. Some lines are lines of just quotation marks, and as the reader you’re expected to, I guess, count them. It’s like standing between two mirrors, but what’s getting reflected? A boring-ass story by John Barth.

I could have deleted “exegetical,” obviously, and left simply “exege-poetical,” but I’m big into the *trace* of literature. What was where,

before? I'd like to just take a minute here and thank Anne Carson for going before me, making criticism a neat way to tell a story, in case one is interested.

Like, Susan Sontag was totally *Against Interpretation*. That's a perspective I can get behind, because when one understands " " something, then one,

Stands

Under

something, like for protection, for power. What art is not: powerful.

I'm not sure I have the best understanding of power. That's on purpose. Adam Robison purposefully did poorly in college so he would not know all sorts of things, so he would not be put into a position of power. Ah, intelligence.

So what's the story, Anne Carson? I mean, what's *my* story? I'm riding my bike home with a video camera strapped to the handlebars, through the glittering downtown into the crumbling neighborhoods of Baltimore's east side.

What about the relationship between "author" and "authority"?

Not on index cards: this story. On index cards: a draft of *Vanishing Point* by David Markson. Not on index cards, *Vanishing Point* by David Markson. On the back of a receipt from the veterinarian: "Can literature make you go, 'Whoa, how did the "author" do that?'"

If the reader is not meant to understand, how can the writer? I really wanted to embed that with some other line. Also: *I Am the Cheese*. And how *The Cheese Monkeys* managed to fit text onto the edge of the page, literally. Paper being an experiment in form.

I can go on all day. *The Navidson Report*, please! I mean, we collect chunks of knowledge like little bits of power. We want people to say, "I also care a great deal for the work of David Lynch." I select my references carefully and make careful alliances. I do this in an attempt to gain more power. (Cf. Matthew Modine's helmet: "Born To Kill" juxtaposed with a peace sign: "Something about the duality of man, Sir!")

Story? This is just an annotated bibliography.

Quentin Compson's story dilapidates until his chapter breaks off suddenly. That's Quentin's suicide, and suddenly Faulkner has etched out a plot. Until then, someone simply climbed a peach tree and looked in a window or whatever.

Like Joan Didion's dead husband alive standing in a pool, re-reading *Sophie's Choice* "to figure out how it works," what literature has made you go, "Whoa?" When David Copperfield made the Statue of Liberty disappear.

When Kurt Vonnegut disclaimed on the publisher's page of *Cat's Cradle*: All persons alive or dead are purely coincidental (paraphrase).

When Beckett wrote in *Molloy*, "...you would do better, at least no worse, to obliterate texts than to blacken margins, to fill in the holes of words till all is black and flat and the whole ghastly business looks like what it is, senseless, speechless, issueless..."

When Henry Miller responded, "You are the sieve through which my anarchy strains, resolves itself into words. Behind the word is chaos. Each word a strip, a bar, but there are not and never will be enough bars to make the mesh."

Moravagine I did not get.

When Hélène Cixous made the point that literature should be unreadable. That literature exists to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Anne Carson, once I began a story with a page blank but the words, "This am a painting." Ah, intelligence. It even sounds ugly.

When Heidegger asked, "Why is there being at all? Why not far rather nothing?"

In Baltimore, Adam Robison is riding his bike home from work, and he marvels.

II.

It does not make any difference what happens to anybody if it
does not make a difference what happens to them.
This no dog can say.
Not any dog can say not ever when he is at play.
And so dogs and human nature have no identity.
It is extraordinary that when you are acquainted with a whole
family you can forget about them.

—Gertrude Stein, “Identity A Poem”



Everything Is Different

I have never read a book by Hélène Cixous
I couldn't even when I tried
I practically never returned that library book
I have no practical understanding of her work
She is a key figure in post-structural feminism
She wants women to write with their bodies

The thinking is that language *per se* favors men
The word for this is *phallogocentrism*
Put it in your pocket and carry it with you
Write me letters on money explaining what it means
I thought language was a technology developed by men
A feminist asked "So what were the women mute"

Hélène Cixous is petite
Her body writes in precise diacritical marks
Her body is telling me *oui*
She was the Woman of the Year in Pakistan
I could be mistaken about that
If so I regret the error but if not *only imagine*

I want this to be the last time I write about her from ignorance
I am deeply impressed with her
I met her at an intimate discussion at the Chicago Theological Seminary
She said all writers are outlaws
Another thing she said is that literature should be unreadable
I have never read a book by Hélène Cixous

Frederick Law Olmstead

He didn't go to college because sumac poisoning messed up his eyes!
He thought slavery was bad business and wrote about it when he was a
journalist

Also he was like a Red Cross guy in the Civil War
He designed the park system in Milwaukee and Buffalo
Buffalo Buffalo Buffalo Buffalo Buffalo Buffalo Buffalo Buffalo
That is a complete sentence!

Frederic Law Olmstead thought parks should be for Everyday People
and he won a contest to do Central Park but for the first decade
or so only rich people could go there pretty much

The poor people could not go to the concerts until the concerts were
rescheduled for Sunday because that was the only day they
didn't have to work

But the thing about Olmstead was that he figured it would take 40
years or so before his landscapes grew to completion

That is also the thing about the plants and trees I guess

He retired when he was 73ish

He was completed nine years later

John Singer Sargent painted him

The woman I used to love loves him (she wrote this line and this one
coming up) but not as much as she loves Martha Schwartz

I still love her even in final edits

Love her more than she loves Frederick Law Olmstead or even Martha
Schwartz

Martha Schwartz won the contest to do the Baltimore Inner Harbor

Erma Ruth Rogers Tyner

The cookies my grandmother made were average
Everyone thought they were extraordinary
She kept several buckets of them
The chocolate chips were too hard
My grandfather would razz me if I ate one
“Get out of my cookies” he would say

The veins on my grandmother’s hands
So much love coursed in her
I thought of the hills around her yellow house
I thought of the interstate highway system
She stitched her own clothes
Her hair was the color of copy paper
Ever since I knew her she had this hair so fine
For Christmas she gave us cookies in shirt boxes
She deep-fried extraordinary doughnuts
This was when people made their own doughnuts

My grandmother, us all, Christian
She warbled through tuneless hymns at the piano
At some point she must not have been so terribly old
Maybe she was Nina, Pinta, Santa Maria
Maybe she starred in the first talkie

My grandmother bathed me in a metal tub
Over and over at dinner she would say happily
“Isn’t it nice to be together” and
“We’re all believers”
She would not let me put mustard in the fridge
Finally she charred the toast
Finally she served baked Styrofoam
I will say this for my grandmother’s cookies
I think about them all the time
Before he died my grandfather bought a generator
My grandmother is still alive

Codename: Ruby Blade

The first President of East Timor is nicknamed Xanana after those hep
Sha Na Na
You're named Sha Na Na you rule with an iron fist maybe
Xanana is wed to an Australian named Kirsty Sword
She was an insurgent—Codename: Ruby Blade

They met while he was in Cipinang lockup for leading the East
Timorese resistance
Ruby Blade schooled the rebel in English and they fell in love and
horsed around
Kirsty Sword has a jawbone that could slay a thousand men
She wrote a book called A WOMAN OF INDEPENDENCE

Joe Louis

First go round Max Schmeling
Dropped Joe Louis in twelve
Everybody started to cry
No one thought that Kraut could do it
The Brown Bomber was tough
But he dropped his right when he jabbed

Then Joe Louis knocked out
The Cinderella Man
Who had eked out the Movable Alp
So Max headed back from Germany
To do a rematch

Last night I sautéed fish in all the right ingredients

Schmeling was fleshy propaganda
But Joe Louis pummeled him and
Ended him in one hundred and twenty-four
Seconds. Bam! Thud!

Schmeling wasn't a bad guy though
In his locker room after the fight
He apologized for losing
He spoke remarkable English
He went back to Germany and hid two
Jewish children in his hotel room
So they wouldn't be killed
He appeared on Joe Louis! This
Is Your Life

Josh Maday

suggests ideas for biographical poems I could write
He suggests Schopenhauer, Maurice Blanchot
He suggests Schleiermacher and Alfred Jarry
Some of these people I know who they are
Pirandello had a fierce goatee but
What about the guy who invented suspenders?
His life as a poem
That'd work

Josh Maday is a diligent Web 2.0 participant
He's a dollar machine of what-abouts
He himself has written many biographical works
"The world's top latex tycoon?" he asks

Witold Gombrowicz, Philippe Sollers
Lauremont or Klossowski
Josh Maday is destroying my spellchecker. Of
Paul de Man Josh Maday wrote

"He lay his tacky body down in the mental dander and rolled
around, thrashing his limbs and his intellect about. The music
reached crescendo. Retinas burned ..."

He strikes me as the sort of person
Who would know something about Giorgio Agamben
Agamben notes the trouble with the end of the poem
A poem being defined by enjambment
But the last line of a poem does not
Enjamb Josh
Maday likewise stretches into eternity

Adam Robison

with dreams written by Blake Butler

Tell me your dream sequence
Let me know what your dream sequence is
I'm fascinated by the crazy things you dream up

I'm convinced that the things you do
Are affected by the things you dream
That's why I want to hear every detail of us
Sponged up with blood biscuits in the pee reef
So I can better understand how it is
That you are plastered from the speech rungs
Of our grief

I'm not a bad psychoanalyst
This is a bad couch
You're a bad lover
Hey Bad Lover
Dream more succinct

Glenn Tipton

To write this poem I listened to two songs by Judas Priest

Holy cow

When I was a boy Judas Priest was forbidden

In Sunday School we laughed at their name and played with it like it
was something hot. We did this with Metal Church and Black
Sabbath too. We dared each other to utter these names

My father was driving in the station wagon and my mother chewed
half a stick of gum up front. My brothers and me were in the
backseat when I said “Ozzy Osbourne” under my breath. The
car stopped and I received a spanking

Then I forgot all about Judas Priest

I forgot about Judas Priest for years

They literally never entered my conscious mind

I more or less spent my adolescence listening to adult contemporary
music

Anyway around the middle of last year I started listening to all the
music I’d ignored. Like I gave Bolt Thrower another shot

I wanted to listen to Napalm Death somewhat

Suddenly I was ear split and scratched up in heavy metal

I made a mix-CD for my girlfriend and I put Judas Priest’s song
“Epitaph” on it

Do you know this song? It’s just Glenn Tipton on the piano. It is not
very good at all. It’s bad no matter which way you listen to it

It's nothing against Glenn Tipton I just don't really care for metal
ballads

My dad would bring home AC/DC records from vacant apartments
and we would shoot at them with arrows

I feel like I wasn't raised to appreciate other perspectives

Manos de Seda

The Mendoza Line

That's in baseball

It's like when a batter keeps missing

It's bad. Downright inauspicious

It's named after Mario "Silk Hands" Mendoza

From the 70s Pirates and the Seattle Mariners

My poems lack depth and a complexity in which the reader can invest

They are bald things

I should be more or less obtuse or acute

Facts compiled truth does not make

Readers will grow bored and go about their day

"There's no urgency" they'll complain "No incision"

"A rarely beautiful book"

I won't deliver compelling stats

What is the universal application for the Mendoza Line?

What is the universal application for silk hands?

Silk-like hands handling fast ripped balls in kicked dirt

Two Poems, Neither About Bas Jan Ader

I was going to write a poem about Bas Jan Ader d. 1975 (?) because
people need to know
He failed at art using only one sheet of paper and erasing his finished
pictures

He is fascinating most of his work is about falling and falling such as
falling from roofs and trees
He would hang from a branch for as long as possible and then he would
drop into a creek

He would ride his bike into a river so slender such good penmanship
Bas Jan Ader's father was killed by the Nazis and we assume Bas Jan
died in a boat

Or in everything that was not the boat for instance the ocean it isn't
clear
He set sail solo across the Atlantic in 1975 and bang howdy goodbye
Bas Jan Ader

It would be best not to write about that conceptualist though
The woman who told me about him doesn't acknowledge I exist
therefore nothing
She has "bas jan ader" and "Shackleton" tattooed on her indelible belly
She could see my poem about Bas Jan Ader and call me a poser
But everybody finds out about something somewhere just hopefully not
from a certain ex
She went all near a year with wearing a different outfit every single day
She never repeated the same outfit twice and she didn't buy any new
clothes
Don't go looking for loopholes it's simply amazing
She is a fashion designer (Yeah boy I dated a fashion designer)
One day instead of pants she wore bikini bottoms
Her legs so smooth so nice but things didn't work out basically
She will not talk to me and I will not force her to
But I am apologizing to her in a poem which means what it means qua
meaning ipso facto doom
I'm sorry I'm carrying such a heavy Chris Burden
One time I was described as "an extreme individual"
But heck I'll talk to anybody about anything
One time a girl said "she has better skin than I do" and I nodded my
ever-loving head

Short Biographies for Quick Trips

Levon Helm is going down to Nazareth
Frederick von Schiller marches onward ever singing
Black Francis is driving doing nothing
Along the shores of Great Salt Lake
Bob Mould is walking away back to you
Isaac Brock drives a long long long long ways inside a car
You have to admit that OK Go treadmill thing is pretty cool
Donovan is going to Scarborough Fair
No that's not right Paul Simon is
Kenny Rogers dropped in to check on his condition's condition
Mick Jagger walked for miles and his feet are hurtin
But Kim Deal is still there in Tipp City
Kim Gordon was on the wrong track
Show Aretha Franklin the way to soulville baby
Breeze blow Kathleen Ferrier's lover to her
Because Roger Miller is the king of the road
King of the road

Søren Kierkegaard

Here is what Søren Kierkegaard's father Michael did
Long before Søren Kierkegaard was born:
He shook his fist at God
Apparently he was tending sheep at night or something
And he shook his fist at God
And denied God in Danish

I think right away he said
"No, no I did not mean it" in Danish
But the damage was done mentally
Søren got messed up by this
He said "Faith is an unreasonable thing"
And "God does not exist
He is eternal" in Danish he said
"God does not think he creates"

There is a lot more too
For instance his father Michael would walk him around the house
And pretend they were in Italy
And Søren loved Regina Olsen
But because of something complicated sad or stupid
He dumped her after four years

His last name means church yard or cemetery
He would write for hours and then go to the opera
For fifteen minutes to be seen
There is a painting of Regina Olsen
She looks familiar to me
He had a pompadour or a feather
A nom de plume was Johannes Climacus

Curtis Ebbesmeyer, Leading Authority on Flotsam

What's up with bottled water man
Bottled water is an interesting economy
One at \$1.29 or a big case for \$3.89
Boy howdy what's the deal with bottled water

What's the deal with the trash vortex
Who put all that plastic in the ocean
Dude why'd your uncle put all that plastic in the ocean
What's up with watered bottles man

Oh crap they got Legos in the ocean
Radial tires ten meters deep and toothbrushes
They got kayaks just floating around nowhere
What the heck happened there

When there are unmanned kayaks floating in the ocean
Is it right do you think that we're thinking about waste
Why aren't we thinking "uh oh where's Bob and Marcia"
"Where's Bob and Marcia since their honeymoon"

Oh holy wow Curtis Ebbesmeyer is so cool
One time 90,000 Nikes fell off a boat actually
34,000 hockey gloves fell off a boat no joke so
Curtis Ebbesmeyer got all the surfers together

He got all the beachcombers and together they tracked the ocean
Whenever a Nike floated past somebody called him up
Curt put it on a map and that my friends is how he tracked the ocean
They were all tracking ocean currents with mis-shipped Nikes

You see what I'm saying broham
What's the deal with bottled water
Sometimes as a whole we're smart
And sometimes as a whole

We're going to die in four years

Elisabeth Elliot

Elisabeth Elliot is another one
She was a missionary with the husband
Whom she married in Ecuador
She studied classical Greek
Her husband was killed by Auca Indians
Run through with spears
Chopped with machetes on purpose
Pushed into the river
This was in the fifties after graduating from Wheaton College
I think it's just awful
Jim Elliot was his name
He had deplorable handwriting
All sloped everywhere with mingled cases
He confused "there" and "their"
Later Elisabeth Elliot started a radio program called "Gateway to Joy"
She conveyed a strict obedience to God and the Bible
With a sensible tough love for humanity
Once she discussed Chekhov's story "Verotchka"
At length off the cuff
In order to warn against the dangers of holding hands
It actually makes a lot of sense if you don't want to get laid
No one wants to not get laid
But sometimes you want to stay a virgin a while
That's important to people and I support it
My advice to these people would be
"Don't hold hands"
Okay I did recently hear about a person who doesn't want to do it
She's married and beautiful and a good dresser
And doesn't do it ever, not in years
She may hold hands
In fact I recommend it
Elisabeth Elliot by contrast is like St. Paul
Who said "It's better to marry than to burn"
She got married two more times
"Gateway to Joy" closed in 2001
But she still writes daily reflections on the Internet
I think she is okay a holy person
But not more so than thou

Brahms

He was friends with Robert Schumann
Probably better friends with Schumann's wife Clara
It was an exceptional time of likeability
They all got together in Germany or wherever
And played five-handed piano

See Brahms only had one hand
But he was exceedingly generous with it
Brahms was the kind of guy
He drove through toll booths
He'd ask the attendant to apply his change
To the fare of the carriage behind him please
And he traveled a lot

He insisted on strict realism
He protested excess
He scorned the work of Magritte
Clara shared with him amusing French anecdotes
Still he disdained the man's paintings
Objecting that they were "too gay"
Or "perhaps interesting but dishonest at their core"

At the time gay meant frivolous
No one knows what frivolous meant

I can't remember the first name of Brahms
But everything else, this all, is true
I might have the words wrong
Maybe in the wrong order

Brahms died in 1897

Martin Luther

I don't like him
I hate his vestments
He was just a reactionary
He made the nuns escape in fish barrels
Martin Luther came over and said
"Where's the basement"
I said "Why"
And he said "Beer"
I knew back in his day
They kept it in the cellar
That's how they got on
What I didn't get was why
Didn't he know the cellar
Was below the floor

He consummated his marriage
While his friends held the bed
Up at shoulder height
That's how they got it on
In fish barrels what an escape!
Thomas Aquinas was on the lam
When he wrote the Institutes
By "Institutes" I refer to the series of
Weighty Reformationist texts

Captain Cool

People find it remarkable that George Brett was the 29th draft pick in 1971 and Mike Schmidt was the 30th

It was George Brett who coined the phrase The Mendoza Line. After a short slump in 1979 he said he knew he was in trouble once seeing his batting average listed below The Mendoza Line

One time Mike Schmidt hit a hit that hit a loudspeaker in Houston. The ball fell onto the field. Oh it did not blossom into a home run. Well if it hadn't hit the speaker it would have touched down farther than 500 feet from the place where it whammed off his bat

Mike Schmidt has red hair. He thinks Pete Rose should be in the Hall of Fame. At one point he wore a wig and received a standing ovation

Mike played the hot corner but was known as "Captain Cool"

While he was a professional baseball player I went from age minus-6 to 12. Moustaches were okay during this time period. Everyone wanted a sportscar. After I was born I kept breaking my arms. I know a lot about Mike Schmidt but he doesn't know one single solitary thing about me

Steve Reich Hears a Pentecostal Preacher

it's gonna rain hew
it's gonna rain hew
it's gonna rain hew
it's gonna rain hew
it's gon rain hew
it's gon rain hew
it's gon rain hew
it's gon rain hew
it's gon fwip
hitsit's gon fwip
hitsit's gon fwip
it's gon fwip
it's gon hitsfwip
it's it's heep
if heep it's heep
if heep it's rain
heet's rain heeit's rain
rain h rain h rain h raib
sgon! ifraib sgon! ifraig sgon!
raigsgon sgon sgon rai
sgon r sgon ra sgon r sgon rai
it's g fwip
it's g fwip
ifsy g fwip
he rain
he rain fwip
herain
herain

That Movie *Downfall*

Adolph Hitler coulda been somebody
He had all the characteristics of a real leader
Maybe if he had applied himself more
Maybe if he hadn't been such a stark raving lunatic

Everybody was just waiting around for him to shoot himself
They were waiting like crazy people for the Russians
They wouldn't leave their insane leader because they liked his mustache
a lot

I would have just shot him in his face
Everyone would have been all "Finally" and "Nice shot"
I would have become the new Fuhrer
I would have made Roosevelt's birthday a Nationalist holiday

Hitler told his guy to burn his dead body
He didn't want the Russians to poke it
It would have been a disgrace
Let's all disgrace Hitler I say
Let's write "Hitler was a bigot" in the signature lines of our email
Let's get stupid little moustaches and go around saying
"Oh I'men de Hitleren Oh I conquereden European I'men de Fuhreren"
"Bitte"

He really was a nice man
He gave cyanide tablets to his friends
He was grave but also he liked to hear
The little Nazi children sing little Nazi songs
Then their mother killed them while they slept

Poor little Adolph Hitler carried the weight
Of the world on his shoulders
There were so many Jews you know
Josh made a movie called "Shitler"
In it Hitler takes a poop then wipes his cute little butt
With some pages from his book Mein Kampf
I don't know but it's like a Russian poking him with a stick

Adolph Hitler Adolph Hitler Adolph Hitler Adolph Hitler
I'd like to lick your forehead
I'd like to punch you in the feet
Adolph Hitler
I'd give you a wedgie
You cute little madman

It's Down to MOM or CLAUDIIIIINE

How do you feel

What do you die thinking of

What is the last thing you say

If you're belly shot in the army do you say mom or Eleanor or whoever

Bill, I believe in Jesus, Peg, not me, I'm sorry

Dulce decorum est do you say that

Mother what do you think your son will say

I figure for me it's down to MOM or CLAUDIIIIINE

At last relax exhale

What direction will your son's head be facing

Deathbed is one word made special for the place you die

But there is no one special place for your deathbed

On her deathbed what do you want your daughter to say

You will be so spitsoul sad

Then you will be okay

Then you will be sad that you are okay

Then mostly okay again and well this will continue

Even now I often feel sad that I'm not sadder

And my worst thing that died was a dog

Skip This Poem for the Next One

Which is what I did
When I put the book together

Alternatively go back
Reread the one about Steve Reich

It took me hours of playing “It's Gonna Rain”
Over and over for laborious transcription

Did you arrive here from front to back
Did you skip around do you pore o'er it

Amanda Nadelberg's poem “Ceridwen” says only
“Read 'Carwyn'/again but with feeling.”

Hey go give “Brahms” another shot
Maybe there is more to it well no promises

Maybe what's best is another quote and
Now this from David Orr and the New York *Times*:

America's younger poets are generating more than their share of our country's best writing. At 34, Matthea Harvey is a case in point. She is in many ways a typical American poet in early career: She teaches workshops, helps edit a journal, keeps a busy reading schedule, pops up at artists' colonies, publishes widely and has had to learn the basic steps of the pobiz hustle (her Web site is polished, her Wikipedia entry primed for expansion). And Harvey's technique is a variation on the trendiest contemporary style, which relies heavily on disconnected phrases, abrupt syntactical shifts, attention-begging titles (“The Gem Is on Page Sixty-Four”), quirky diction (“orangery,” “aigrettes”), flickering italics, oddball openings (“The scent of pig is faint tonight”) and a tone ranging from daffy to plangent — basically, two scoops of John Ashbery and a sprinkling of Gertrude Stein. It's not hard to write acceptable poetry in this mode, which is one of the reasons so many people make use of it. After all, poets need jobs, and for those, they need books — and for those, well, they need poems.

But if it's relatively easy to write passable poetry in the style du jour, it's never easy to write good poetry in any style.

(February 17, 2008)

Our Heideggers

Poetry, Language, Thought (my copy), and
Poetry, Language, Thought (her copy)

nestle now on their shelf
They inform each other

“Heidegger looked at a jug”
my copy says professorially

“and wrote ‘The Thing’
which says quote A thing is a thing

insofar as it things end quote”
“Not bad,” her copy of *Poetry*,

Language, Thought responds

Some Men in My Family

My one brother was adopted
So I don't share any of his natural qualities
And my same-mother brother he's no good
He claims a mix up at the hospital
On account of his curly blond hair
And I'm so obnoxious

We went on a ski vacation then came home
I went directly next door to tell Brian Fronczek
All the snow in Utah is exactly the same as all the snow here
It's the depth that makes the difference
My natural brother fetched me home
On account of our grandpa
Was dead in the basement

We used to sit down there me and each of my brothers
Tossing Nerf balls to my grandfather's good hand
But now there would be no more of that
There would be a pronounced lack
Of throwing Nerf balls to paralytics
In the basement

Our dad would bring meals down to that carpet-ceilinged room
Peel for his own dad an orange shred kernels off the cob
Then once a handicapped mess had been made of the food
That man down there would yell his own name which was Albert
He'd yell CHRIST ALMIGHTY

I kept calling my one brother *adopted*
I said you're adopted adopted
I ran from the laundry machine to the bathroom
Yelling Adopted! and You have a hole in your heart!
Because he did. People smarter than me call it a murmur
A ventricular septale defect I yelled
Yelling You, Adopted, have a hole in your heart
Through the locked bathroom door
And he kicked that in off its hinges

[Whoa]

Let others complain that the times are wicked. I complain that they are paltry; for they are without passion. The thoughts of men are thin and frail like lace, and they themselves are feeble like girl lace-makers. The thoughts of their hearts are too puny to be sinful.

-Kierkegaard, from "Diapsalmata"

Just when I thought I think I know so little I learned one of this world's
topmost amazing things
I learned about Black Diamond
She was a Liberian freedom fighter
I am feeling considerably enriched

One thing I've seen a lot lately is graffiti drawn on Post Office labels and
affixed to corporate art rather than written directly onto the
surface like with a marker or spray paint or a penknife
What is that about
Skateboarders probably don't like any corporate art that they cannot
ramp on
I didn't like the sculptures before now I don't know how I feel about
them
"That's a lot of metal" I sometimes think
"Alexander Calder Orange" I've been known to call it
There was a time when I would have put a sticker on some stupid
sculpture
I would have somehow calculated that I was duty-bound to commit
such vandalism
I'm not saying that I thought "I think I know everything"
I didn't
Think that I mean
I thought very specifically that I don't know anything at all
This would have manifested itself differently back then however
With more countercultural élan say
The Danish word for élan is *fart*
I don't understand it

III.

There is no reading or writing that is not subversion.
Furthermore, the text's imprint or writing,
Even unaware and even unwilling,
Can operate indiscriminately
Because it does not convey, but rather
Produces.
By the same token, any resistance to the imprint
Will provoke torsions and distortions in its program.
Close attention cannot flush out the silent efficiency
Of the phantasm.

—Luce Irigaray, “The Rape of the Letter”



Adam Robinson

Because I'm in charge, I'm in charge
Come on
(In charge – really, really in charge)
You know I'm in charge, I'm in charge
You know it
(In charge, in charge – really, really in charge)
You know I'm in charge, I'm in charge
Come on, you know
(In charge, in charge – really, really in charge)
And the whole world has to
Answer right now
Just to tell you once again
Who's in charge

How We Continue

There is a baby in a stroller in the library
His mother is typing with heavy fingers

He is not moving he is sleeping with cake
Dirt on his face and his hand is clutched tightly

In on itself

This boy dozes fatlipped in his lap is his
Formula and softpack of menthol cigarettes

Right next to him is his mother whom
I cannot see because we are each in a cubicle turned

In on itself

To the Crazy Guy by the Police

Crazy Man you were alive with something
Hey Crazy what gives
Your eyes bloodied but
The blood was not pouring
Blood was pooling
On the whites
You were sinewy
Like you were already dead
Already plastinated
You jumped around
Crazy Man and said
IF I BEGET A SON
AND THE SON BEGETS
ANOTHER SON
WHAT IS THAT
I said a grandson but
NO A BROTHER
AND WHO IS MORE MATURE
I said um
You said
THE YOUNGEST
Everything seemed
So self-evident

I was cowed
In the morning
Hashing it out with you bro
But two police cruised to the corner
And stopped at the light
And looked at us, me, tenderly
I looked at their short-cropped cop hair
And in my relief a world was confused
I tried to sell them knock off watches
Crazy Man you tickled my belly
When I thought you wanted to

Shake my hand
Crazy Man
Crazy Guy
I said I'm going to be late for work
You said GET THE HECK OUTTA HERE

The Skeptic

I'm looking for a balance
between not God and God
like fruit
or feet
or all the little birds
on Jaybird Street

Zach Mayhem Chronicles (Ch. 2)

We had spent years looking at the moon so naturally we were excited at the prospect of going there. But our pilots were concerned about escaping the atmosphere at the right angle so they took to their calculations. I did not want no egghead pilot so I said I would do it. I would do it just put me in the right chair and buckle up. Budgetary restraints made this feasible. I burned a lot of gas but I'm Zach Mayhem and before long we arrived at the moon. Next thing you know the advance patrol was pulling out compasses and maps and wearing lab coats and I didn't want no eggheads for advance patrol so I said I would do it. But the aliens of fear! they said. I do not care I said just put a bazooka in my hands and point me in the General's direction.

It was me who rigged up the bio dome and when the plumbing goes kaput I'm the one who breaches the outer hatch to fix it. Lord knows I don't want no brainy plumbers but we've got to stay comfortable and when it comes time for a little R and R I work hard so I play hard because I'm the doctor and the chef of this loony outpost too.

More

Met a girl in America
Her voice was dark, cool
And I'd overhear her say funny things
And oh she was smart in every sense like smell
She performed brilliantly with art
One time she did tell something to me
She said reaching back to sit
She said I'm going to smoke like a fiend
Now I say these words all the time without thinking or smoking

Then later we started to talk
That was the best ever
That was truly something else altogether
When we started talking I never could sleep
Once I saw her walking with a cup of coffee in my alley
Rain was in the forecast
Swim I said yes she said I'd go swimming
This is all that matters
Let's allow ourselves this more

Mr Scary

If there is some knocking at your window
If it starts a seed and grows a great oaken fear
If it pause the silent spread through your head like a scent

If say your parents are out till midnight or so
There is some growing knocking if it bristles
If then the house in its urgency gives a quiver

If your door creeks open a cricket a quiet curse
If and only if then the fear is a pulpy meal
It will not finish if it's all in if you are in if you begin

Sidewalks

So there where it mattered
I scarfed the first good lamb since
Tuscaloosa when along came
Shirley who drug us up
To the Poetry Corral
Now we found robots in a
White room and you called it
“Retard art” which is a delight
Fully correct our discussion
Bore it out over wine
And you went to rehearsal
I went for Polish meatloaf and
Traced Frank O’Hara’s name
From old stone walls
There is a tree in the yard for
Ted Berrigan and there I met three
Quirks with as many brows
Between them

A Colleen

Take a dog
Give it to some girl
Really give it to her
Give some girl the leaking dog

Take a girl
Take that girl and shove her
Put on the dog a little
Give her to the dog

Take a gift
Go to Florida
Get two collies
Take them at night

Rapture

My childhood home would fall from the blue
Sky with my childhood dog inside it but
My third apartment would just hang there that
Dull apartment would bang poof and fwip away to

My roommates who would leap and free
Fall all their limbs awave afrantic their
Hands smelling like sandwiches their
Milk spilling from glasses corking through that blue

Sky the sentence "Here's one for the mouth stomach" would
Fall our vacation in China would wind a giddy path down
Into our sad memories of sad memorials and
My inability to say anything in Chinese like

Cesuo, which means *toilet*
sezwo, chesoo I cannot say it

When my childhood house fell from the sky my
Childhood dog ran through the rooms yelping my
Mother trilled The William Tell Overture and
We pathed down the sky with grace tumbling

Thinking About the Poles

The most important thing I have to do right now is think about something
Or really is think about nothing—I already was thinking about something
I was trying to figure out if my company has 2 or 4 XE subs and if they can
be co-termed

Some people around here think WAM, LMI and DOJ all have a feed
But when I talked to my rep last summer she said everything was co-termed
already

So why is the invoice just for 2 things is what I had been thinking about
What a waste of a fine mind well not really

So much depends on whether I get all of my job's XE subs renewed

If I don't do it no one will know what the dollar is worth anymore

Pretty soon there won't be any more money in the world

Hospitals will collapse and banks and television studios

Everyone will just hang out in parks all day and then next thing you know
there is a shortage of TP

We would become a nation of dirty-butt chess players in Washington Sq Park

Even the President of the USA has a dirty butt said Jack Kerouac (paraphrase)

No TP that happened to Poland in the late 80s right? Yuck!

I wanted to verify that so I Googled toilet paper shortage

Oh man you have to check this out:

[www.thelongestlistofthelongeststuffatthelongestdomainnameatlonglast.com/
trivia74.html](http://www.thelongestlistofthelongeststuffatthelongestdomainnameatlonglast.com/trivia74.html)

Whoever wrote that article is a writer I can get behind

In particular I like the first sentence

“If anyone can remember, the early 70's everything was in short supply
especially oil”

Perfect

My Summer Vacation Via Conference Call

...One thing that is not easy but actually totally worthwhile is being a classically trained singer. The thing about playing the timpani is that they're tough to move and then once you do get it to church picnics you only get to play about four notes per song. Even playing rock-style guitar has its drawbacks in that sometimes you have forgotten your axe somewhere. But you pretty much always have your voice so you can sing that "Dies Irae" wherever you go if you can sing it. It's not easy but like I said it's totally worthwhile.

If there are any questions I'll be glad to address them at the end. Maybe make a note of them for now so you don't forget or if you forget that's no problem. We are already each granted so much.

Anyway here's a picture of my brother's cat Ivan the Terrible. He's cute and playful and smoked out. Now here I am playing a song on my ukulele. That's my salty friend Jeff and my bald friend Benji and behind me with the squirtgun is Craig. He's single ladies and if you're looking for a guy who can play the metal ballads on piano then look no further. No a piano is a good instrument. Ultimately though what you want is a sing—

O Love!

Your socks have fallen round

Your ankles

Your fly has

come unflown

Your eyes

have rings of darkness &

You're still

not quite yet grown

Camaraderie

When good old Bill Brower disembarked
From a long raft trip down the Mississippi
He drove away and crashed
With blinding speed into a truck
With intense drama and river legs

It took those things
Those Jaws of Life things
To pull him out to freedom
YOU CAN'T FLIPPIN KILL ME he said
He danced around on the highway
He got all braggadocious about being alive

He's my friend Bill Brower
He eats PB&J at restaurants
It's his thing

Pompadour!

Alpha beta zoot
Coif of love
Mane of the seducer
A Jacques explode –
Loyal little shih tzu –
L' aurore

Nowfuture! I am awoke
Perfected after all
After all when I was nine
With oriental wisdom
I feathered then
At last fled the sorcery

Sinceways have I langored
Unkempt. But
Nowupon circumstances –
Pillowcomb, roll abike, heat –
Having aligned gaily
So Kierkegaard
And Beethoven
And Elvis
Finally jealous of *me* –

Abracadee!

Binghamton, NY (2)

Oh my high lobster brain stongue side to smile
Old and beautiful man uncomfortable a ca table
Finger tale miles thru cracks in helmets of hair
I see him everywhere now i dont work & hes unstable
By zeus you have a lahvly wife man a table eyes like roe
Theyre arrest a while

I'm going to have *sex* with
these people

Everyone seems really good
People are so beautiful man
Take for example this lady on the bus
Take everybody on the bus
Don't forget to take the driver for example
All so beautiful all these people with like their coats and foibles

Take everyone outside the bus walking a dog
Take their dogs they're nice people you know what I'm saying

If you're on the bus heading into the wrong neighborhood who's more
scared you or the bee

I manufacture enemies because I'm so good natured in general I get
scared

God is love believe that but dude your mama is seriously fat

This lady on the bus could pass for a man
She chewed half a cigarette
In her mouth she had jowls she did knitting
From the back of the bus I loved this lady's what is it
The young pro aside her smell sat repulsed
I liked that

Good job everyone
Thanks a lot you people

Party On Excellent Man

That guy at the office is fine
That lady's hair has so much body
And something's wrong with the boss's nose
It's burning red

That guy with the dumbest jokes ever
That guy who wore that shirt yesterday
In her cubicle she keeps her candy
Hard and wrapped

He's on the phone rolling her eyes
She chuckles there in that chair IMing
Then some guy listens to violent radio
I'm growing inflamed

Am I having the time of my life
Or am I having the time of my life

Bureaugard our falcon

A huge yellow bird
Has fluttered
Into the window
Now I think he is dead

A man in a tuxedo just passed
He is not rich he is a waiter!
In scratched tasseled shoes
He eludes the bird

Two days ago
Eleven hundred people
Watched slyly
Shyly in humiliation
Eyes arched over
Necks craned over
Pored-over newspapers
As three be-hula'd
Hot numbers dressed as
Future-cartoons
Whipped around space
Their orbs

Not speaking
Their suntans
Looked painful in
The silent rays of
Z-axis

These wowzers
Fluttered on it
And brang us

Poem for Stephanie

Cinder garden
Time to grow

Letter to Dave King

The title
Of your book
THE HA-HA
Says it all

Still you spent hours
Writing and rewriting

Yessir
How you doing Dave King
Writer of a novel I liked
About being nice to mutes
Which I read in Axle's
(Where Milwaukee's east side meets)
Sipping soda from a bowling pin
Sitting next to
Would you believe it
A mute

I made fun of that dude
Ha-ha
Not really

Letter to Dave Kirby

The title
Of your book
THE HA-HA
Says it all

Still you spent hours
Writing and rewriting

Those poems really knock me out
With their U.S. American lines
They're a little longer than how I normally like them
And they're all about like food and your ex on a trip or poetry
But the thing I like is that except for the way they look
It's not entirely clear that they're poems at all

I think about that sometimes
And then I realize I don't know what poetry is
I think about that sometimes
And then I realize I don't care
I think about that sometimes
And then I realize who does care no one that's who
I think about that sometimes
And wish I was thinking about pilots or an Eskimo
I think about that sometimes
And then I realize I am

I don't know what poetry is
But if you tell me it's like
"A tapeworm is an animal that
Loves another animal"
Then cool I like poetry
But if you tell me "Oh no not that"
Well then I too dislike it

Poem

For some reason Hemingway, Henry Miller and Flannery O'Connor
popped in for a visit

I had just returned from work and my legs were too tired to really
socialize

So we watched the new Herbie movie together

They were all surprised by the direction moving pictures have taken and
also the direction automobiles have taken

Anyway they gave me this magic potion

They said I can use it to publish books

Whatever books I write will be published

Then they said they give this potion to everyone but most people don't
write books

Most people write movies and for that serum Henry said I'd have to
look up like Stanley Kubrick but he's all blood biscuits in the
mental dander

Poem Bag

Cat

Hey household pet
Work hard
Do a good job

All the Little Screws

All the little screws
have been put into boxes
and the tools are set
neatly onto shelves

Couch

We found a headboard in the trash
Cut off the legs and moved them forward
Set a plank across the two parts
And laid Theresa's cushion on the plank

My Internet Tendency

Yesterday I watched the Brewers
Step on the skulls of the Cubs

Baseball

Every day I receive more books about baseball
in the mail

Poetry

I am waiting for someone to call
with my username and password
so I can follow the appropriate steps

Adam Robison

From here the sun is smaller than my thumb
But I am powerless to change my vast mistakes
My mistakes are smaller than the sun
And 7x hotter I feel a tremendous sorrow
Sin big nothing hey wow a little flower

Puke Nut 3000

Peanuts have dead fish in them
Dead fish in them made of peanuts
These fish have peanut flippers
That are so small and yet still peanuts
And still fish

I Suppose Kierkegaard Was Right—
Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom
after all – But What Does That
Really Mean I Mean Come On
Homer Am I Right?

The baddest-assed police
Are so righteous oh baby
One said I'm tired
Of this tired of this I'm
Tired y'all of this cussin
His hunkered arms quivered
His partner said well actually said
Nothing just deflated into a squad car

These righteous police exasperated
Roll out huffing no arrests
And the hoodlums shake no collars
Can crime climb so high oh baby
Above the knee high strides of
Our baddest acid cops

IV.

I've saved my best thought for the last laugh of the century,
and my worst thought for the seconds after.

—Johannes Göransson, “The Seminal Union of Carvers”



Super Introduction

“So I surrendered and sadly learned
There can't be a thing where there is no word”
from “Das Wort” by Stefan George, trans. Adam Robison

Poetry is a transgression because it languages something that hasn't been codified by the architects

The structure is always nearly complete. The engineers are even now designing rooms to accommodate new actualities, new corridors for justice

But freedom is not a physical matter and there is no hall of justice. It resides outside of the structure. It's unapproachable. Freedom is not a result and justice is no ultimate destination

Forgiveness is justice, and beauty. But first is forgiveness

But inasmuch as these things remain outside of the structure they transgress. And those who forgive are outlaws and those who create beauty and those who recognize fullness, they are outlaws

It isn't as though the structure seeks to exclude these things. These things are unsystematic by nature. Beauty resists the structure as much as the structure ignores beauty

There is no chamber of authenticity within the structure. The municipalities of the power of the air have sealed every space breached for freedom: home, church, factory, prison, school, shopping center and state park—we create these structures ourselves. Outside is only imagination, artistry

A corrupt government can be eluded. But the structure permeates life. It can be blissfully ignored but not avoided

Resistance is structural but transgression is poetry



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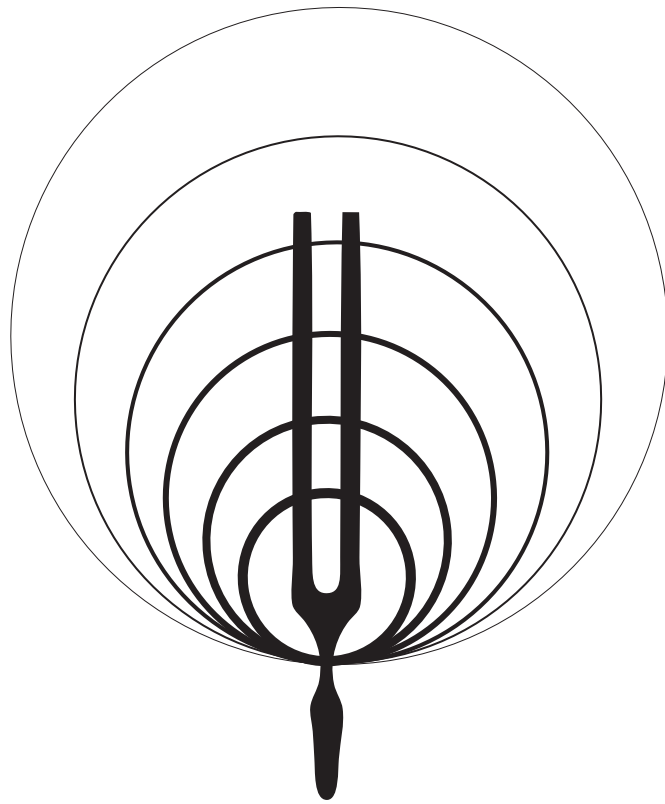
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