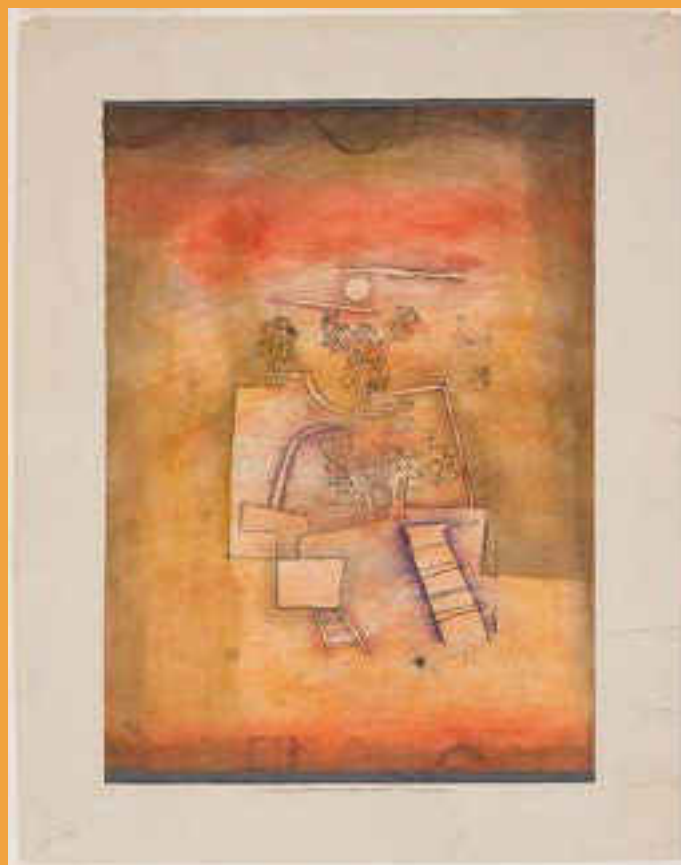


# Otata 16 (April 2017)



otata 16 (April 2017)

<https://otatablog.wordpress.com/>

Copyright © 2017 by the poets.

Cover image: Paul Klee, *Tree Culture*.

johnmartone@gmail.com

## CONTENTS

John Levy	5
Kim Dorman	8
Charl JF Cilliers	12
Sonam Chhoki	13
Mark Young	17
Antonio Mangiameli	21
Stephen Toft	22
Goran Gatalica	23
Eufemia Griffio	24
Alegria Imperial	26
Dave Read	28
Margherita Petriccione	30
Ingrid Bruck	31
Billy Antonio	32
ai li	33
Christina Sng	35
Angiola Inglese	36
Elisa Allo	37
Mark Levy	39
Angela Giordano	40
Marco Giovenale	41
Bob Arnold	47
John Perlman	56
L'incinta	57
Jack Galmitz	58
Sean Burn	60

TOKONOMA

The most unexpected think for someone who is entering social life,  
and very often for someone who has grown old there, is to find that  
the world is as it has been described to him, and as he already knows  
and believes it to be in theory Man is astonished to see in his own  
case that the general rule is shown to be true.

(Florence, 4 Dec., 1832)

— Leopardi, *Zibaldone*  
(Ed. Michael Caesar and Franco D'Intino)

# *John Levy*

the light  
inside the hospital  
room with no  
windows  
is too bright  
standing still  
on metal crutches

knock knock who's  
there the swan through  
dark water

## *Name Change*

if my name were  
Were, John Were, my back  
against the were  
any words I wrote were  
my face in the mirror was  
on a scale of one to were

rain the wet dark  
green  
hummingbird lands

forgive me spring  
for tracking autumn in  
I have ashes to scatter

## *Poem*

here is its body  
here is its voice  
here it takes a step  
here it will rejoice  
headed nowhere  
like anybody like none  
here it goes downstairs  
to the sun

red falling leaves first leave  
their tree then  
their reds

rose petals immerse space  
within curves it  
sinks, embraced

Ed. note: the May issue will feature John Levy's *Robert Lax Notes*, an account of his visits with the master in Greece. You can watch him read his *Float among what sails & spirals*, written in response to Don Cole's paintings. His *Oblivion, Tyrants, Crumbs* is available [here](#).

# *Kim Dorman*

## *At school*

the smell  
when you emptied  
the pencil sharpener

tapping it against  
the metal trash can



*1959*

Heavy coats  
& the smell  
of damp wool.  
Flushed cheeks, dripping noses.  
The teacher talks about  
the seasons. I know  
there is death.  
I am seven years old

*Minutes*

Morning. I look out the window.  
Blue sky. A bird sings  
from a branch. My cell phone  
buzzes on the table.

*Blue October*

Bees hover & dart  
Lawns still thick in the sun.

~

A beautiful young woman with long black hair  
walks a pit bull on a leash.

~

Children exit a Jeep.

~

A helicopter circles twice.

~

There's a high concrete wall between  
the neighborhood  
& the freeway.

~

Beer bottles in a blue plastic pail  
waiting to be recycled.

~

Christmas lights that stay up all year.

*Blue October, II*

Full moon in Aries, just  
over the trees.

~

Three police cars parked along the street.

~

Warm day, slow moving clouds.  
I step on acorns on the sidewalk.

~

An old man wanders into traffic.

~

A gray cloud  
passes over,  
  
but the light  
doesn't change.

~

It almost becomes a lyric.

# *Charl JF Cilliers*

## *Darkness Comes Suddenly*

for Brendan

Darkness comes suddenly, I heard  
the locals say. I watched  
the sun, from my own beach lookout,  
swept rudderless at wind-tossed dawn  
onto the rocks. Afternoon  
showed me scattered, splintered light  
washed up onto the shore, and bent  
amongst the shadows on the beach  
a small boy trying to shake sand  
from objects broken but shiny  
enough to be loved, even later,  
by a sea-swept man who was once  
a boy kneeling in shadows down  
on a sun-wrecked beach one afternoon

# *Sonam Chhoki*

## *If Only You Knew...*

Hesitating like a hand on misted window I have no words to describe what I feel in silent joy, what is it that binds me to you.

another spring  
slips in unnoticed ...  
first primula heads

.

## *Shabbied by Hope*

Waking up to the thudding of moths on the pane the dishevelment of dream, the intimation of future heart aches.

cloud-rimmed moon  
low flight of a barred owlet  
in a litter of shadows

## *Impulse of Love*

A leaf floats down; in its twirl I see my daughter's fingers curled round mine when she walked to the family shrine on her first pilgrimage.

The crane swishes soundless tracks in the dawn sky and the sun touches the peaks as if lighting a row of butter lamps. I murmur a prayer for her journey in life.

what does it know  
a blue thrush whistling  
in the bamboo thicket

## *How to Quarry Darkness*

You've left  
on your karmic journey  
to a new rebirth.

The memory of you  
so present and wounding  
even in the telling.

I have found  
the language of pain  
lost that of hope.

### *The Dishevelled Goddess*

When Jimi died  
his wife didn't cry.  
She laughed, she danced.  
You see  
She has Wild Wisdom,  
visits me in dreams.

### *The Absurd Expanse of Bliss*

I climb the dream rope beyond the peaks, beyond the stars in rapturous silence hear the moon laugh  
temple gong  
toppled in the quake  
hibiscus belling in the wind

sound of first rain  
no music to them  
homeless boys

power outage  
a door closes  
in the distance

coming to roost  
ravens in the temple grove  
compete with the gong

full glow  
of a Venice sunset -  
Murano glass bowl



*Mark Young*

You will find me  
in the transit lounge.  
I am between planes.  
Neither has landed yet.

token  
gestures  
will never get  
you through  
the turn-  
stile

w(or)ds

In  
street lamp  
light — indecent candy.

It's a  
Pollock  
I'm after

not some  
dainty  
Klee.

## **Neverest**

She paused to  
admire the view

once she reached  
the top of the

mountain. Then she  
continued climbing.

## **humming**

Th'e  
l  
e  
g  
a  
n  
c  
e

of bright birds

is often  
[obscured by]  
their  
color.

## The Dowager's Palace

I listen to  
the peacocks

& invent new  
poets from

the T'ang  
Dynasty.

(Ed. note: Mark Young publishes that most-important of contemporary poetry gatherings, *otoliths*. You can find some of his poems in *Jacket 2* and *bareknucklepoet* as well as [The Poetry Foundation](#).)

# *Antonio Mangiameli*

puddle -  
a robin pecks  
its shadow

# *Stephen Toft*

my movements  
over rocks  
shaped  
by the the rain  
the sun  
the buzzard

within a ring  
of snowy mountains  
breathless, cloudless

a single crow  
flies off

we sit surrounded  
by standing stones  
surrounded by mountains  
loving one another  
under a grey sky  
between ice ages

# *Goran Gatalica*

shooting stars -  
sleepless father's shadow  
on the balcony

sledding  
our looping pathways  
under the supermoon

# *Eufemia Griffo*

*in memory of my mother*

alzheimer's  
white white white  
snow falls

grandmother's portrait  
a spider's web  
above the frame



blast of wind  
the nun's veil  
flies to heaven

anniversary  
the cold ring  
on the finger

loneliness...  
woodworm's noise  
in my room

(Ed. note: Readers will want to visit Eufemia's blog *Memorie d'una geisha*, which she has tended many years now. )

# *Alegria Imperial*

*they say*

mountain clouds  
implode in a colic

a stare brings on  
revolts

snow buntings invite  
green eyes

fibrous bones  
roll down a mulch hill

a rasp in his caws  
one catches

wild weeds  
pierce fresh wombs

in a clam shell  
of not-thereness

## *about the spheres*

a wink enough  
to lift  
the moon's hem

a slivered blue  
licks paradise

part grit part  
fluff the foaming universe

constellations stringing rocks into falsies

concoctions a boom of moon craters

## *interpretentions*

with my lips I accept the many ways grass wears dew that Van Gogh kept secret

I agonize so much so that my stomach contracts regurgitating Dali's white lies

a valley of lilies I hurtle into with eyes closed on Monet skinny dipping

the spastic leg throws of marionettes as Picasso dreamt I can

together shedding barnacles from cliffs chipped clean in cubes Mondrian says his own

thieves inhabit the hippocampus of dawn beetles scaling the spirals of Gaudi's nights

my singed heart hurts so the onyx solitaire Klee entraps with dancing threads

## *Dave Read*

evening train  
I squeeze into  
my headphones

morning fog  
I shake a hand  
that claims we've met

migrating geese ...  
an absence fills  
with snow

distant siren ...  
tips of feathers  
poke through snow

sundown ...  
my eyelids close  
my book

one umbrella ...  
we close  
the space between us

# *Margherita Petriccione*

wind in the eye  
an hibiscus branch —  
sways

morning tea —  
and as always at corner  
anchovy seller

April beach —  
smell of burnt seaweed  
and paint

classwork —  
through the window  
two swallows

Ed note: Those who read Italian can find a very good interview of Petriccione [here](#).

# *Ingrid Bruck*

planting Christmas  
remove the lights, dig a hole  
water the pine

heatwave breaks  
workhorses in the pasture  
frisk nip and roll

(Ed. Note: You can find more of Ingrid Bruck's work [here](#).)

# *Billy Antonio*

the pickings of  
gleaners and birds  
waning moon

homecoming the key still under the rug

night trip  
the silence of  
the mountain pass

fresh laundry  
i rewrite  
my resume



*ai li*

small town i hear my footsteps in the dark

the old retainer  
he kowtows to me  
in the cedar courtyard  
before returning  
to his century

the boiled egg eaten      the silence

making love  
to ella  
the window open

cold night  
your memory brings  
me a shawl

(Ed. note: Please visit *the cherita*, which ai li edits with Larry Kimmel.)

# *Christina Sng*

old owl  
its hoarse hoot  
still echoes

driftwood  
I wander from  
stall to stall

moonless night  
my black pen  
missing again

a little girl waving  
from a passing bus  
palm sunday

# *Angiola Inglese*

supermarket —  
the over-sixty discount  
without asking

misunderstanding:  
magnolia petals  
over the gate

irrigation  
regulating the nozzles  
I speak as one

aunt's ashes  
on cherry tree  
first bud

(Ed. note: The reader can find Angiola Inglese's Italian language poems [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). )

# *Elisa Allo*

without umbrella –  
a cat shelters  
under tulips

dying night –  
spring blows  
over caffè latte

forget-me-not!  
the florist screams...  
it's too early

butterfly wings too heavy in rain

(Ed note.:You can find more of Allo's poetry at [tansazku](http://tansazku.com).)

*Mark Levy*

icy rain  
the temple bell  
won't ring

tiny stars  
try to anchor  
the darkness

cloud drifts  
pause  
things are themselves

# *Angela Giordano*

Traffic in town —  
the cry of the ducks  
more intense

a beggar  
new leaves  
under the old shoes

foreign country:  
the nightingale  
so different

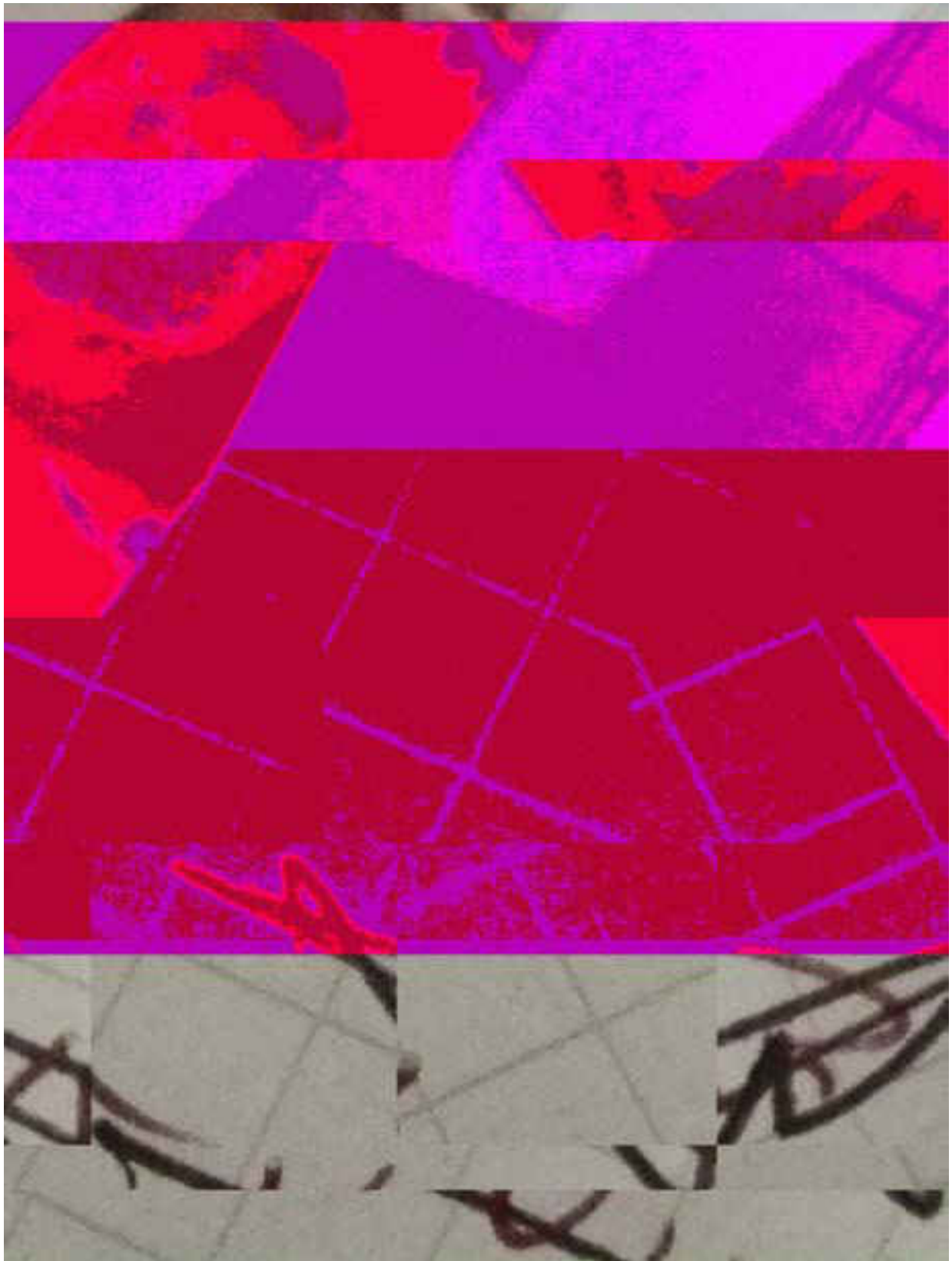
convertible —  
shooting stars  
above the seat



*Marco Giovenale*

## Five Glitchasemic Pieces

(Ed. note: Marco Giovenale lives and works in Rome. He edits <http://gammam.org/> and publishes Archipelago editions. He curates the blog *slowforward*. Among his many books, *Shelter* is available from Donzelli and *Il paziente crede di essere* from Gorilla Sapiens. An excerpt from the latter is available at *Nazione Indiana*.



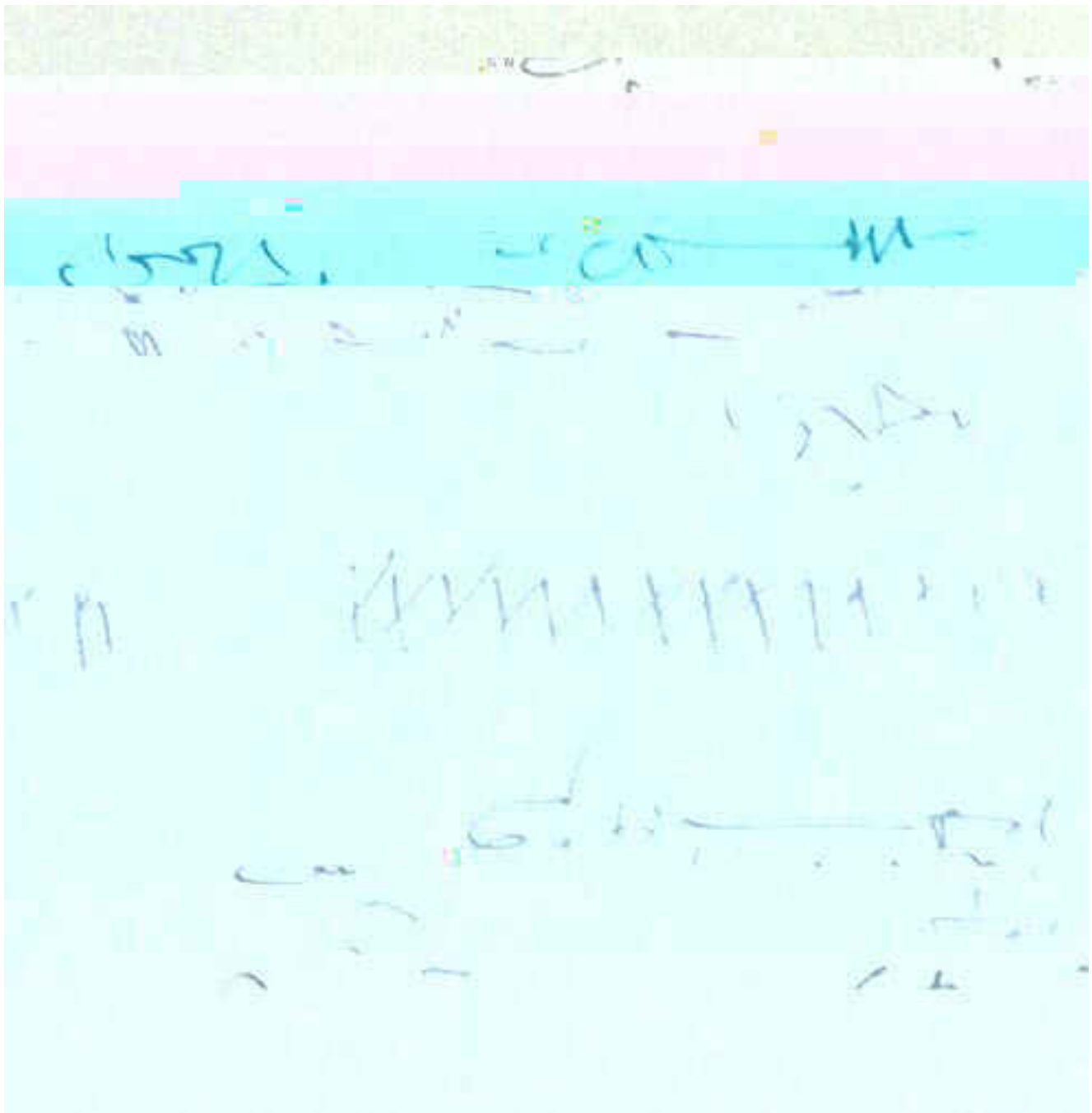


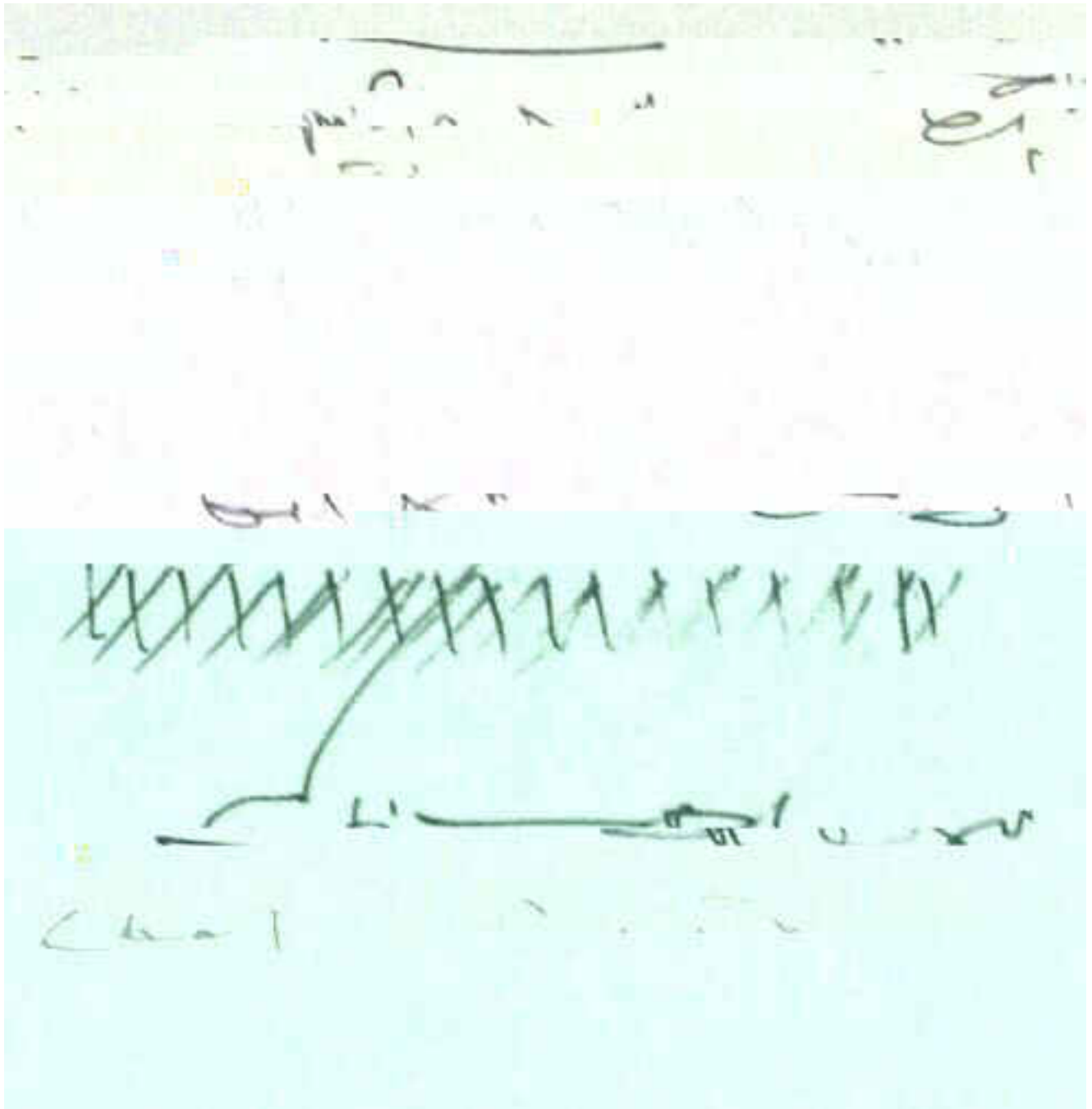
27185

881 33 30 82

Autumn  
time

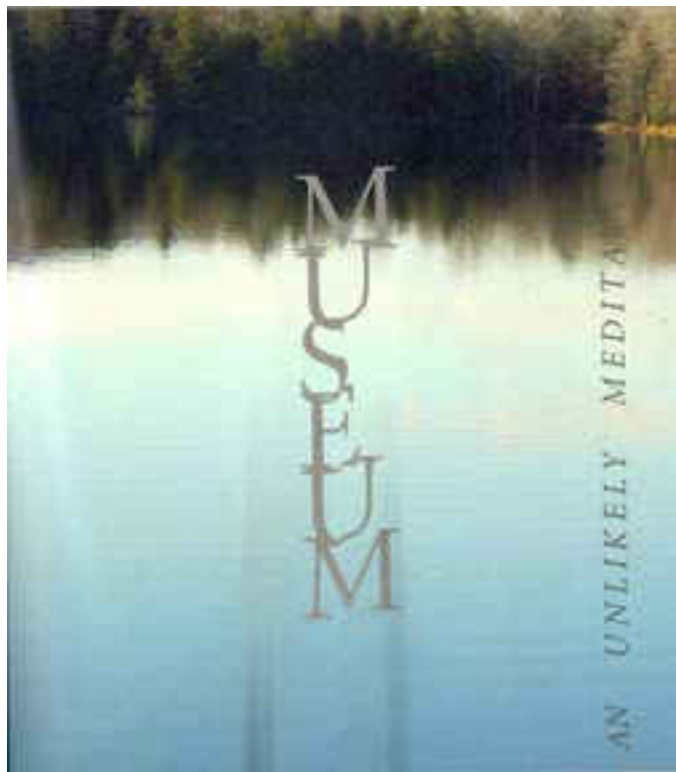
Autumn





*Bob Arnold*

FROM



(Ed note: Bob Arnold, poet, publisher, stoneworker, book-seller, has been sheltering generations now in his *Longhouse*. A few images here from his magnificent Museum, shows just how he fits in his time and place. The book is a wonder of words and photographs and can be found [here](#) or by clicking the image above. As George Willard writes, and the editor concurs, “Not since *Winesburg, Ohio* has there been such a book.”

Readers will also want to visit his [Longhouse Birdhouse](#) and the best online [poetry bookstore](#) in the country.



## VISIONS

Jimmy fell in love with the woman on the TV but he had no idea how'd he ever get to meet her, and why would she be interested in Jimmy? Jimmy changed tires for a living, all day, all week, four seasons of New England long. Hyper drill sound is Jimmy's body rhythm. He knows there is something wrong with him but right now, the TV on, late at night, and the woman who is a former congresswoman is looking pretty hot to him. He googles and finds out what he is slobbering over is 56 years old. Obviously some work has been done. She's twice Jimmy's age, anyway. What in the world is wrong with Jimmy? He can't take his eyes off the woman. The woman acts like she knows men look at her this way. Jimmy never once has seen any woman like this who bring their Subarus and Hondas into his outdoor bay. They drive up, walk inside, wait, flip a magazine, or forget the magazine and have their faces down deep into their smartphones, which are no longer phones if you want to be honest, they're cameras and bugs. Jimmy saw a woman never lift her face off her phone for a full forty-five minutes waiting for her car while Jimmy was inside getting warm wrenching tires off their rims. Jimmy didn't even have a wife or a girlfriend, he had visions. The former congresswoman had him by the balls and it all was a million miles away. He turned the TV off. Took a shower. Scratched his balls. Went to bed.



## *THE ROOF*

When we pulled into the parking lot of the town, the brick was still on the roof. A lone brick, obviously fallen from the house chimney but we couldn't find the gap in the chimney where the brick had come from, unless someone had thrown the brick onto the roof from the parking lot. We used to be a country of riots and protest where bricks were thrown. I don't think there had ever been a riot in this town. We looked around, even though the brick had been on the roof for over a year, but still we looked around to see if there were any brick throwing candidates. We were alone. My wife wanted to go and buy her weekly ice coffee from a nearby shop, and I would stay behind in our pickup truck where I would study the brick. Earlier in the trip to the brick and the parking lot we had passed an accident on the highway, three vehicles and one was on fire. All the people were far away from the burning vehicle. They stood on the other side of the road with arms crossed staring at the alien vehicle waiting for the fire trucks. It was left alone burning. It reminded me of the brick left alone. I've been left alone while my wife went for ice coffee. There are trees everywhere. They catch the wind.



## *THE UNUSUAL CAR*

The day Benny jumped onto his sled he was nine years old. It had snowed the night before and Benny loved snow, lived for snow, he lived in a part of New England where it snowed a lot and so winters were long. Nobody had snowplows much like they do today. Everyone shoveled and at nine years old Benny was starting to earn some spending money with his shovel and going neighbor to neighbor to see if they wanted their sidewalk shoveled. It used to be all sidewalks were kept open by each neighbor and Benny could earn 25 to 50 cents from each neighbor depending on how long their sidewalk was. He was still too young to think of shoveling their driveway, besides as the oldest boy of his household his parents expected him to be the one starting in on shoveling their driveway. His two younger brothers would get out there some time with him. But before Benny shoveled that morning, he wanted to take his sled down the driveway. The incline would take him about fifty feet and then he would stop before he went into the street. There were huge snowbanks there to stop him if he wanted. For some reason Benny felt adventurous more than usual and took the sled down the driveway, avoiding the snowbanks and went straight into the street. He felt for sure he had looked both ways. That's when the milk truck hit Benny. Dragged him with the front tires for a pretty good distance since the driver had already seen the boy coming down the driveway and had applied his brakes, but he couldn't avoid the boy or the sled. He just shut

his eyes and prayed. While this was going on Ronny was coming the other way in his souped-up car. It was a car without a door on the driver's side. Years ago in small towns all around America you could get away with such a thing. Ronny saw little Benny barely under this milk truck, the big tires, all the fresh snow and he didn't stop to wonder what was happening, or even stop his car; he jumped out of the slow moving car and went down on his knees sliding toward the truck to get after the boy. The boy seemed all right, he was just squeezed between the locked tires and the snow road. Ronny scooped Benny up into his arms and rushed him toward Benny's house where his mother and older sister were screaming to no one what they were both watching from the kitchen window as Ronny came closer. They got Benny inside, onto a couch and Benny remembers hearing the older people talking lowdown but way above his head. Benny also remembered smelling the aroma of Brylcreem in Ronny's great head of hair. Ronny was handsome, like Warren Beatty, and after Benny felt better in a day or so he started to use Brylcreem in his own hair.



## *CARRY ON*

156

Everyone was dying now and to Jess and Leelee all the best and everyone they already knew were all gone. They looked around and the ones that visited them the most and wrote them the longest letters and called them on the phone and wanted them to visit were out of here. They still had plenty of friends, they were just confused and allowing a higher quality to the ones who had died. No one seemed to be talking about them anymore. There was no way to make any sense and put their names into any conversation with others and have any of the others be comfortable or want to pursue a conversation since Jess and Leelee spoke of these long gone loved ones as people who were still with them. To the two of them all of them were still with them. They saw the lost ones in the trees, along the river, on the back roads, into the flower gardens, as they stepped onto each stone step walking up, and walking back down. They felt their words as each step. Felt them with them. If they were going to be there and Jess and Leelee were going to have them, well then, let them be. Let the alive ones step away from Jess and Leelee. They already have.

## *SOMEWHERE*

The man didn't like the other man the first time but he liked him the second time. It sometimes works like that. The man liked the other man's wife, they both were young and so was the man's wife. They all did things together. It was two couples. When the man saw the other man take the man's VW Beetle and drive it around the man's house, the man and his wife screeched with delight and circled inside their house, tiny room to tiny room, to see if the other man would really take it all around the house, including over the septic tank that the couple hoped he wouldn't collapse down into, and was the clothesline down? or would the other man sling-shot into that? Better yet, he went right under the clothesline. It was a VW Beetle after all. No matter what they did together or as a couple the other man would be delighted by the memory of that VW adventure. It was unique, spontaneous and daring. However, the man and his wife instead became closer to the other man's wife and the other man started to drift apart, he started to make a lot of money and his life was now dictated by money. His wife became deeply depressed, tried to take her life, and one day the man and his wife can remember visiting the wife now living by herself and they circled a city park, almost every inch, as the woman told her story. Not a bit of it was pretty. The other man disappeared forever, even though he is out there somewhere.

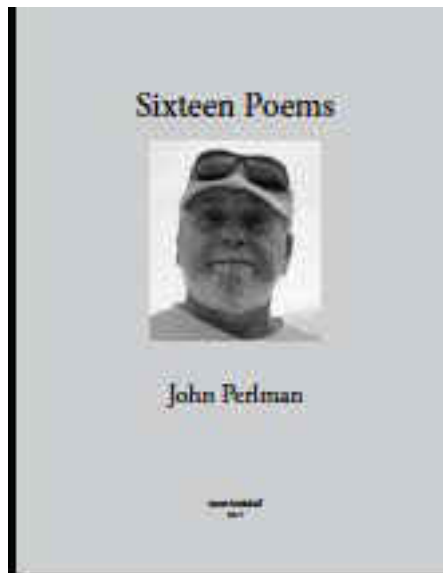
## *THE BICYCLE-BUILT-FOR-TWO*



Millicent Freeman just loved his bicycle-built-for-two. It was black and white but black and white all in the right fashion, decorative, almost like a candy cane. When he rode the bicycle you would swear that it was twirling. Some people called the bicycle the candy cane, others called it the barber pole. Millicent didn't have a preference, he just smiled at whomever said either title and tipped his hand at his brow like he was wearing a cap with a brim but he wasn't wearing a cap with a brim, he was just acting like the old actor Paul Muni. No one remembers Paul Muni. Millicent was filled with all sorts of facts and ideas from a time no one else remembered. He could still get into a conversation with anyone and never delve into that side of his personality mentioning things like Paul Muni and how tall was the Golden Gate Bridge. As far as anyone can remember only Zeke Bellow, who is ornery to begin with, born ornery even his mother would say, was heard to walk away after a conversation with Millicent Freeman and mutter, "I don't give a rat's ass about any Golden Gate Bridge." If you looked over to Millicent, who certainly heard the not at all docile Zeke Bellow, he'd be standing there as straight six-foot-three smiling. It wasn't his height that Millicent needed a bicycle-built-for-two. It had nothing at all to do with his height, his height was just fine on a bicycle-built-for-two. He needed the bicycle-built-for-two so his wife Molly could ride with him. Even though

Molly had died ten years ago in a terrible head-on car wreck on Route 33, and wouldn't you know, she was only going to mail a letter and she'd be right back home. A young woman on her cellphone with a big dog in the back seat had other plans. After the crash and Molly's death Millicent sold his car and bought the bicycle-built-for-two. He rides it everywhere he needs to go and where Molly needs to go. He knows all the short cuts through town, back alleys and slim parking lots behind stores and it's uncanny to watch him and Molly move that bicycle through all the passes. Everyone in town when they see the couple, wave and shout out, "Hi, Molly, Millicent!" and Millicent waves. Anyone not from town can see there is no one else on the bicycle-built-for-two other than Millicent. The town folk sound so convincing and loyal that not one out-of-towner has questioned who they were shouting hello to. They watched the bicycle and the man go down the street. They thought the bicycle twirled.

# John Perlman



(Ed. note: Click [here](#) or on the cover image to download the e-book.

John Perlman is the author numerous titles of poetry, including *Kachina*, *Homing*, *Swath*, *The Natural History of Trees*, and *Dinner*. His broadsheet *A Walk Around the Lake* is available from Empty Hands Broadside.)



*L'incinta*

## Matryoshka Doll



**L'incinta**

(Ed. note: Click [here](#) or on the cover image to download the e-book.)

## *Jack Galmitz*

*When I die I will*  
be cremated.  
But when my wife  
asks where I want  
my ashes scattered  
I still haven't decided.  
After such a long life  
I don't have a single  
place where  
I love to spend my time  
now and hereafter.  
I recommend  
she scatter my ashes  
into the night. When night falls  
I always want to bound into it  
like a wild dog.

***Why do I write?***

My finger tips  
on the quiet pads of the keyboard  
as quiet as the mourning doves  
on the ledge of the roof  
the bronze of the morning sun  
looking at what? Flying insects  
or seeds? Can they see that far?  
It's the privacy I love  
listening to the heater's hum.  
Here I create the self that cherishes  
what it does.

***Sometimes I feel***

that I'm lying  
with a python in bed  
when you squeeze me  
and wrap yourself  
around and up to my head.  
I have a bad back,  
you know, and it hurts,  
until I realize you'll swallow  
me in the end.

# *gobscure (Sean Burn)*

**wishaw 18/9/16**

photograph scottish thistle - camera says face detected

strawberry tarts are from butchers, libraries are where love abounds

bowhead whale has two hundred year old harpoon embed to flesh

greenland sharks oldest vertebrate around four hundred

spruces cluster southern sweden : each over eight thou

last homewards lookin for harvest-moon

secrets in the listenin, secrets g/listenin

rust never weeps (for all at celf, mid-wales)

evolution is passengerless cars no just driverless

man uses hot air to blow  
autumn leaves about campus

humourless armed police  
the drugs dog beelining  
- long-lost f(r)iend?

tickets are to be activated  
biscuits are to crave

live drag shows : leeds heel bar  
theres a market for dead-drag?

shropshire advertises well-rotted manure  
spreads race-hate

rust in peace three layers deep  
rust, peace, rust never sleeps  
never weeps never  
rust never rust ever rust  
sleep now sleep  
now weep now  
three stories tall

jan says the bees are sleeping

returning our black star now only silver

over tyne bridges, moon huge (as) head, full on dancing

## 281216      edinburghalice

train station/s they ad 'reality on demand'

box  
&  
binge  
versions

free trial, three-ninety-nine monthly after  
no con-contracts

how much (for) surreality on tap?

yesterdays minister for constitutions wz also for unicorns

crows rowd  
teamtag  
night-beams  
over&ahead

white (& other) rabbit runnin lates (still

(Ed. note: Poet and dramatist Sean Burn is *reclaiming languages around mental distress in writing and in art*, recently through his *still alone in her voices* project. See *here* for his vita and *here* for his book from Shearsman.