

ANEMONE SIDE CAR

CHAPTER 11  
of  
THE  
ANEMONE SIDECAR

## Corporeality, Part II

- Bender, Laura. 19  
Erikson, Jessie. 22  
Kalamarz, Julius. 24  
Kostelanetz, Richard. 16  
Neiva, Bruno. 8  
Pate, Taylor Jacob. 14  
Quinn, Philip. 2  
Riesener, Tree. 28  
Renner, Cooper. 29  
Shapiro, Alice. 11  
Spacks, Barry. 15  
Stewart, Michael. 12  
Williard, Gregg. 21  
Woodward, Angela. 25



The Anemone Sidecar, Chapter Eleven, 2010,  
built on the work of select multitudes.  
Cover image by Daniel Boyer.

*Anesthesia for the living  
formaldehyde, you're dead.*

-Alice Shapiro

Philip Quinn: 6 poems

*Body Worlds*

Bare back plastic under bright lights  
Muscles like coloured ropes, fine strings

Pull on the spine of scapula  
Unwind the big mad worm  
Tweak the sleeping parrot  
Brilliant plumage of organs and hip bone wings  
That cannot take flight

I worry the spinal chord like beads  
I worry not enough love

Only this package of beef  
Orbs like hard-boiled eggs peeled of their shell

*Children of the repeating wind*

sacs of pericardium suspended like possums  
toes of a greasy stoma

eye in the stomach blinks twice  
the overcast rib bone sky

*shakira the shake*

fallen loose from the Babylonian tree it's sooo not what the  
prophet taught... you're not wearing malabis and it's haram to  
look at you dancing

god?.. not here, not now, not ever!

but so fuckin' Siamese your hip twitching  
& bronze belly latin declensions

sharing                      w/us  
                                    that insane  
                                    haemorrhaging of the eyes

hog tied in U tubal ligation

do you hear the tympani? the air raid sirens? circuses not bread?

westerly winds snake through your hair...your fringed  
please...you...with your Pandora's box...us with our borrowed  
pimp hats and counter clockwise dancing...are you listening...do  
you hear our bongos? our castratos?



## *Evolutionary Speed*

Phalanges on the throttle  
Mouth burping gas  
Move like a heated spider  
Behind the green glow of a protective shade

Confused scream of the accelerator tourniquet  
Nematode pressed firmly back into Styrofoam seat  
Metalled body hurtles distant night

Has a flat  
Breaks up  
Fragments turn seed-like

The first spaghetti-like growth of fender  
Pop-up headlights like eyes  
Baby grill

*By the integument, intimately adherent*

The spriteness of the bone ghost  
Metacarpal looseness that ends in the  
ulnar border

In the mist, the pinna of outer surfaces  
the millet seed of glossary tongue

Flattened cells make tunica, a digitalized fossa  
The resultant fascia of thin

All this goes on beneath the treasured jewellery of her eyes,  
The sun in orbit around the blanketed wrist  
Push through the digital readout of sympathetic ganglions

Spanish galleons                      the great gluteal vessels of love

*untitled*

Put body parts in other places  
Store as extras  
An eye in the pelvic arch  
Three teeth in the cavernous sinus  
Or more properly  
The robes of the external rectus  
Draped like a cilia over the membrane of corti

Bruno Neiva: *Visual Poetry*, and two pieces from  
*what does r stand for*

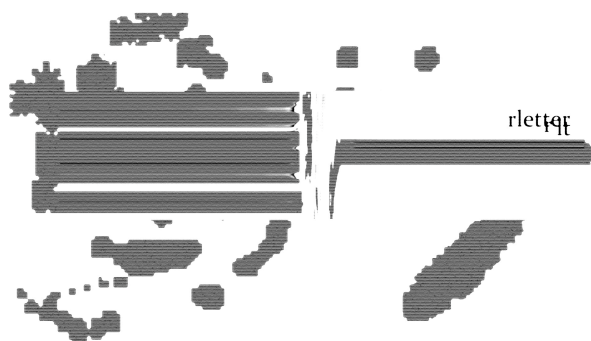
I endeavour, through aesthetic objects that can be conventionally called *visual poems*—in what concerns these classifications—to select unstable rather than *safe and sound* terminology, to scroll language playfully, metalinguistically and multidisciplinary. How?

1. Taking advantage of any information mean, making use of it freely, studying ways of appropriating and directing it.
2. Inquiring into ways of incorporating in the produced object the aesthetic elements that may inspire all sorts of debates—but, above all, debates on the object's properties and conception.
3. Attenuating the frontiers between the various mediums and material supports that we have at our disposal. Applying several techniques, old and new.
4. Avoiding the production of *monoideological* aesthetic objects.
5. Experimenting, first. Conceptualizing, after.

A Coruña, Spain  
3<sup>rd</sup> June 2010

**Bruno Neiva** is Portuguese, 27 years old, an experimental writer, visual poet and mail artist. Publisher/distributor: umaestruturaassimsempudorreedições.  
<http://umaestruturaassimsempudor.tumblr.com/>  
<http://umaestruturaassimsempudor.blogspot.com/>  
<http://issuu.com/umaestruturaassimsempudor>  
<http://vispoets.com/index.php?showuser=638>  
<http://foffof2.blogspot.com/>  
<http://famousalbumcovers.blogspot.com/>

*rletter*





Alice Shapiro: *Usury*  
from *Cracked*

Where are the roses as their fragrance wafts  
over the pleasant earth? When we're  
oppressed, the years carve small lines  
at the corner of our mouth. Expect  
nothing from the world's princes.  
Rather, just paste your lips shut.

Michael Stewart: two pieces

*The Sin Body*

Some ghosts can only be seen through a veil. Others are little more than a fragrance or an occasional glimmer; a brightening on the edge of the silver or a misting of the glass on a portrait. Some are nothing but my shaking fingers. On occasion I will powder my body with talcum and meet them, my lips painted with ash. A certain lady I meet in my slip, which has turned the ruined color of ivory and has, along the hem, the small holes of teething moths. On those nights I pour brandy into cordial glasses. Thick pear brandy. A syrupy swill in my mouth. Sometimes in a dialect of spitting and growling they attempt to move my tongue. Other times I cough into a thin white napkin and read the spots of blood.



*Va dormir, Margarete\**

The language of spirits is the language of tubes and wires. It is often interrupted with a low hiss. It has metal tongues and taste of copper. Sometimes I fill my mouth with water and feel how language makes it tremble.

\*These were the last words heard on Dr Konstantin Raudive's 1965 EVP recording.

## Taylor Jacob Pate: *Pink Fluoride*

The American Dental Association's *Dental Abbreviations, Symbols & Acronyms* contains

52 pages

It tells me that I have a sparkling new ABR (abrasion) on posterior number 4 & I'm in need of a DOF (distal occlusal facial) on lower 18

Cocaine

Tobacco

Cocaine

Satin seminal stains burrowing like opalescent termites into the soft enamel of anterior number 9-I'll need a MODF (mesial occlusal distal facial)

On the TV

A tooth swirls down the sink like an expiring halo, *Shit man even the Mona Lisa's falling apart.*

On the wall

Rows and rows of baby food jars glinting their secrets, the booty from four generations of tooth fairies, crystals from Arkansas, Granddaddy's gold caps, marbles for Uncle Todd, sharks teeth & plush black sand

3 ounce familial anecdotes

Maybe I could perform a PACR (post and core restoration) on anterior 22, ball point pen style, bubble gum flavored Pectin (28 mg) to ease the FTP (phantom tooth pain)

D (distal)- 6,7,13,14,30,31,32

M (mesial)- 25,26,27

E (extraction)- 2, 20

Exposed root tips

Cast pink shadows

The glitter of

Glamorous decay

Barry Spacks: *Mountain Poem*

for David Arnold

Climbing the mountain we're shameless, we say  
"Bless you, bug, I must pass by!"

Camped at the top we tune our tone  
to match the pitch of a hovering bee.

Rocks on an outward ridge look like penguins  
ready to dive: they think it's an ice floe,

this slow wide spaceship  
disguised as a mountain.

Then who flits by? -- three magicians from Italy  
(passing, in drag, as three white butterflies,

show- offy drunks so dizzy on spirals  
you'd think they would have to be seven, or four).

High on the mountain we're tempted to soar,  
we who are dangerously bio-degradable,

drawn to all fluttery methods of joy,  
taking our time on the way to the valley.

Richard Kostelanetz: *Openings* #12 and #24,  
(following pages)

He was told only that he would find the name of his next wife in the local telephone directory.

My father never drank alcohol publicly, except as a priest at the altar.

He would see the fireplace cracking apart well before he could feel whether the cause was heat or cold.

She discovered at twenty-five that a decade before she had written a lesbian poem without recognizing it.

Prostitutes assume that when they die they'll be able to blackmail their way into heaven.

She gave me a stick, a magic stick she called it, which I put in my back pocket, forcing me to sit up straight all the time.

Whereas he had made more effort than I in beginning our affair, by now the initiative for sustaining it had, I feel, passed on to me.

*Never before had I seen a garage can filled with so many contraceptive sponges.*

She checks her makeup in the mirror before entering the bank, remembering that on a latter's line she once met a well-dressed man who, alas, did not give her his card or say for her telephone number.

I remember entering a church and becoming married to a man I'd never met before.

He was beginning to hate his mistress as much as he hated his wife and wondered whether he wouldn't ultimately be better off if he abandoned both those wenches and, instead, lived with his hands on the street.

What was he to do with a hundred manuscripts to read and evaluate in less than an hour?

Laura Bender: *Homunculous*

I was laughing far too much when I put my fingers  
up to my forebrain and realized there was a lady in my head.  
She was curled  
in a red balloon, with her knees tucked in  
and her lacy skirts dilating like she was her own pupil.  
A homunculus is used in neuroscience as a representation  
of our own bodies. The more engorged the body part is  
in the homunculus, the more sensual and tactile it is.  
Sometimes the penis is represented, sometimes not. The vagina,  
never. In the old days the homunculus was thought to reside in the  
sperm.

A miniature man inside a worm, another more miniature  
inside his worm, and so on. The sins of the father passed down  
to all sons. Women were made from accidental absorptions  
while inside the mother. So if the homunculus is always a man,  
why was there a lady in my third eye? Why was she kicking  
my parietal lobe? After the initial surprise over said lady,  
I grew bored of her, and finally  
dangerously enraged.  
Having a body that does not belong within you is like having  
rabies.

I was unconscious of my murderous intentions, even after  
the neighbor came to enquire about his missing shih tzu  
and the suspicious tufts of fur between my incisors. Even after  
I extracted the mailman's windpipes and braided them,  
making spectacular chimes for my window, the wafting cilia  
refracting light into my bedroom. I knew she had to go.  
I stuck a needle in my eye, but it did not reach her.

I took a hanger and I unbent it and I broke  
my nasal cavity and inserted  
the hanger and swirled it around and there was a flood  
of lady parts and amniotic fluid and blood all over my brand new  
blouse.



Gregg Williard: *Fusion Waiter*

Hello! My name is Balthazar and I'm your waiter for this evening! Tonight's specials are: Poached and Bronzed Tuna Gill, marinated in a basil and leek flambeau; Fresh Rhubarb and Venison Hoof Pie; our Calais Hard Tack, stuffed with ground snail and barnacle paste, wrapped in an au gratin skin of seared amaranth yeast and Corinthian lard, throttled by a dried beet and barley cat-o-nine-tails baked in banana leaf tongue of flayed inquisition livers, served with braised calf roll stewed in a peach brandy cream udder, sauced and pleated in Ukrainian onion rinds on a bed of grated mango and a tulip pestil garnish, with avocado skin bathed in Pamplonan fig nectar and refined Oaxacan Tabasco ash, casque-aged on a Cajun suet-brothel jam spread. We are also featuring Fresh Free-Range Utah cheetah-Placenta Bisque, served on a chilled heirloom chick beak and claw consommé seasoned with a runt potato and collard mold, with a side of hummingbird brain mash with palsied testicular drippings and a decanted goat gland gelatin puree, stuffed with fresh Brazillian Torquemada bean and dry-roasted el prospero thistle root dipped in Colorada ant-eater musk. For entrees this evening we are offering Beaten and Honied Badger Lung Roll; Roasted Rump Stirrings in a Tangy Pheasant Pox Marinade; Kodiak Skirt Steak in a raisin and magma sauce; Purloined Pug Hen steamed in soured horse milk, and a Spinach and Peyote Ox-Soup Chowder, served with a side of freshly salted Algerian malt flakes crumbled over a blackened leg of clove-brocaded Berber mutton.

Would you like to start with a drink?

Jessie Erikson: *A series of short poems  
with Portuguese*

*four am becomes seven torna-se dez*

às vezes há um peso atrás dos meus olhos  
for my fists to find  
for the heels of my hands to press  
contra-

não, not a weight  
only o som do tren  
only the soul of  
something, a alma  
das plantas—

elas esperam levantar  
the shining cabeças  
delas

\*

*lasting*

my throat tightens  
small and slippery as a snake  
wanting what i have

\*

*tierrita*

my teeth are polished pebbles  
i have eaten up the earth  
to keep it close to me

\*

*we bend as the earth bends*

there are no lines:  
the horizon has become a bubble  
burst, expanding in every direction  
an umbrella over the earth

so that, roadless, we now see  
the shape of ourselves  
heavy and hanging as clouds  
waiting for what is here now

it rains late in the afternoon, but barely

Julius Kalamarz: *two pieces from Monochromes*  
*grapheme—color (Aphakic Ultraviolet)*

granulated synapses trepanned to the touch

drink deep seas in syncopated                      radii

AUV 41

girl façade in garden tasks falling veer to

grandeur——

come meadow to table and holler to shine

AUV 18

The work is a synesthetic take on Yves Klein's, *Proposition Monochrome: Blue Epoch*, and Claude Monet's change in color palette following his 1923 cataract surgeries.

Angela Woodward: *Things that Can Be Done to  
Skeletons*

The latter cranium seemed to have housed a large brain, but like many others from the same site, it had been massively deformed by sedimentary pressure. It was not at all bowl-like, but had fallen in on itself. Nevertheless, he was able to measure the arch of the palate of other fossil cranial bases. Reproducing the airway allowed him to theorize whether the skeleton had been capable of speech. Language depends on a precise physiological apparatus. He hoped to determine whether the skeleton had had such an apparatus, as opposed to another apparatus that produced only grunts and cries.

Wear patterns of the skeleton's dentition revealed how much grit the skeleton, when alive and possessing a chewing mouth, had consumed. He needed to know whether the skeleton, when a living being, had eaten animals it had hunted and killed. It may have simply picked up carrion when it came across a deer, mastodon, aurochs or fox splayed in the bottom of the gulch. He compares the skeleton's teeth to the teeth of modern-day bears, who have a diet similar to primitive vegetarians. The poor bears, with their massive clumsy paws, are better at swatting things out of their way than at killing mammals. Maybe one day they will sit in a restaurant and order steak. But today their teeth show the typical worn grooves of those who tear up plants by the roots. Careless.

He found much evidence of fractures among the skeletons. They had unhealed arm breaks, splintered collar bones, dented skulls. They must have barely been able to heave themselves into their nests, where they moaned, sweated, lay awake all night because of

their multiple injuries. He finds a similar distribution of bone breakage among rodeo cowboys. The skeletons flung themselves across running beasts and fell off. Rhinoceroses, which roamed across the lush Iberian peninsula before the skeletons lay themselves down in their graves, trampled the skeletons. He infers that the skeletons' lives were intensely painful. The skeletons are perhaps more peaceful now.

Did the skeletons, when their primitive hominid flesh robed them, love each other? Because there were more of them, he is sure that they had sex. He doesn't know if they hankered after exquisite forbidden perversions. Did they like piss, and ropes, and fingernails? Even more workaday eroticism hasn't left much of an imprint. The female skeleton could have begged the male skeleton to turn her over so she could take it up the ass. He may have wondered, another time, if she would ever hold his whole cock in her mouth again, now that she was across the river with another tribe, and he hadn't seen more than the back of her head in the distance for an uncountable stretch of time, which today we would call years. None of these feelings or actions are useful for reproduction, that is, the creation of other skeletons. But perhaps wanton behavior was part of their culture, which allowed the whole group to prosper. The skeletons may even have derived a keen disquieting thrill from raping, impaling, and stripping the skin off other skeletons they captured. They may have been disgusted with themselves later, or they may have quickly, soullessly, moved on to their next amusement. Not enough evidence is left of the soft parts for him to know what those soft parts felt when rubbed up against each other. The soft parts are mute and useless. They decayed more or less instantly, while the skeletons have endured.

There is a difference, he wrote, between evidence and indicators. He is willing to entertain somewhat looser speculation than some

of his British colleagues. The skeletons in any case must sometimes be ground up, in order to verify percentages of heavy vs. light carbon, which tells him whether the skeletons lived in grassland or forest. Or nothing at all may happen to the skeletons. The skeletons may lie in the dark and cold for millions of years, with entire cities of their descendents pressing agonizingly and unyieldingly down on them.

Tree Riesener: *bound in blood*  
a meditation on a gospel bound in human skin

about 1918  
in foochow china  
you were executed skinned and bound  
around a book written in chinese  
the label says a new testament  
in your wildest dreams  
you never would have thought  
you'd end up a book published by  
the methodist episcopal press  
now it reposes in a glass cabinet  
at the american philosophical society  
in philadelphia pennsylvania  
next to jacob christian schaeffer's  
paper made from leaves and flowers  
and pierre-alexandre léorier-delisle's  
made from the bark of a linden tree  
the eighteenth century flowers  
and linden bark are still there  
transformed into unfulfilled paper  
unused for a single sketch or word  
I guess your bones are in china  
but your skin continues to do its work  
although nobody's touched you  
for a long long time  
we have to think about the words  
held together by your blood and skin  
are they still in there somewhere



## Cooper Renner: "*Augustus Darvell*, by Lord Byron"

*A Note:* That *Augustus Darvell* (not the "Fragment of a Novel" but the poem presented here) should in some ways mimic the not quite linear narrative style of *The Giaour* is not surprising, given that *The Giaour* was quite popular in its time. That it should build upon the aforementioned prose fragment while returning Byron to verse is likewise entirely characteristic. That it demonstrates evidence of the more openly erotic vein Byron explored in *Don Juan* is again predictable, since its period of composition seems to have overlapped with that of, at least, the earliest cantos of the comic epic, which is to say, a time when Byron had already been living outside England for several years and must have felt a continual loosening of the rather puritanical mores which constrained English writers even in the decades before Victoria became queen. That we have not known of the poem before now is a bit more perplexing, as it originates in the pen of one of the language's most noted and best-selling poets, but even here we cannot honestly claim to be shocked. After all, the poem is not terribly long and adds little enough bulk to Byron's collected works. If it is more clearly supernatural than is common for the poet, even that characteristic is foreshadowed by the prose fragment from which it developed.

The discovery of the poem, even so, ranks as one of the literary coups of the year for two reasons: first, for its source (which is also to say, for the explanation of its previous 'loss') and, second, for the mistakes it makes, not as a work of literary craft, but as an exploration of a specific folkloric (or national) vein. In the first case, the poem was not so much lost by Byron as it was hidden by his friends (or, more likely perhaps, a friend of friends).

One would in fact be forgiven for thinking there should have been any number of lost Byron poems or dramas, considering the peripatetic nature of the last eight years of his life and the various manners of transport by which letters and parcels had to travel from various European countries and the Ottoman Empire back to his publisher (generally John Murray) in England. The poem's discovery in the library of [-----] in Malta both is and is not puzzling: puzzling because Byron spent very little time on the island which only became a British possession not many years before the poet's visit; and not so because it deals with the same subject matter--lycanthropy--as the lost Coleridge poem "Son of Lykos" which this editor has already prepared for the press. Indeed the Byron discovery depends upon the Coleridge, as I had first traveled to Malta to research Coleridge's time there. This conjunction of subject matter is the key issue, in fact, because there is no reason to believe that Byron wrote the poem while in Malta, a fact which demands then that someone took the poem from Byron, with or without his consent and before any other copies had been made, and carried it to Malta--a sequence which further presupposes a person who knew of the Coleridge material and wanted the Byron work to be added to that 'archive'. If the tentative dates for the poem were other than they are, that person might well be John William Polidori (see my edition of *Christabel: a Fiction*), but the chronology almost certainly renders Polidori impossible. That being so, the only viable candidates are the brothers of [-----], though I have yet to find any plausible reason for one or more of them to have been traveling with Byron.

If we grant that one of the brothers secreted the poem with the Coleridge papers, then we by definition grant that the poem was hidden due to its subject matter. The question is *Why*? In the case of Coleridge's poem and the accompanying prose, the *desire* for occlusion (if not the *need*, strictly speaking) is utterly understandable, as Coleridge's works reveal a deep awareness of

the nature of the Maltese lycanthropy (psychological or actual) which the brothers assist in screening from the outside world. Byron's does no such thing because it is not accurate, even at the level of accuracy we want from a work of poetic fiction. Byron's lycanthropy is a rather muddled--or (to be generous) ambiguously suggested--affair with only two points of reliable contact (*Malta* and *werewolf*) with the reality. Byron's explanation for how lycanthropy reached the island is wrong, as are his vague indications of how a man becomes a werewolf. Furthermore, he muddies the water by drawing in incidents and "powers" far more characteristic of the literature of vampires than of the Maltese werewolf tradition. It seems plain enough that Byron had no idea what he was writing about and simply latched onto a few stray comments--perhaps overhead in Malta or adduced from Coleridge's ramblings when he was under the influence--as a way to attempt once again to complete successfully the Shelley challenge of 1816: to write the scariest story possible. That Byron's poem is eerie and mysterious rather than frightening is not remarkable: what constituted "horror," at least in a literary sense, in the nineteenth century is notably tame by contemporary standards not because our ancestors were more easily frightened than we are (they were probably less so) but rather because they were more imaginative than we are and responded quite strongly to suggestion and innuendo. Instead of needing an explicit serving of gore on the pages before them, they supplied most of the horror themselves, allowing the author's implications to be filled out from the terrors of their own existence--rampant disease, infant mortality, doctors who knew virtually nothing, capricious and often authoritarian governments.

Byron's evocation of ordinary life on Malta--as slimly detailed as it is--reveals more accuracy than his lycanthropy: the fishermen, the women dressed neck to foot, the omnipresence of the sea, the devoutly practiced religion, the corruption of the knights in their last years of power on the island. Indeed the

narrator's psychology as he recounts his depressive expectation of Augustus Darvell's arrival and these titbits of native life may be the most revelatory aspect of the poem: as Darvell has degraded the innocent "son of Malta" with his infection, so too was Byron violated by the nanny who introduced him to human sexual practice when he was too young for the knowledge and too obedient to resist the teacher. The effect on fictional character and real author is the same: the gift, the knowledge, the curse--call it what you will--can neither be renounced nor recovered from. The recipient can, at best, hope to channel the infection into less toxic forms. Byron, notoriously, failed in this attempt. Perhaps his creation of a Maltese innocent is his message to us that that failure hurt him more than he might otherwise suspect. --CR

*Augustus Darvell*

by Lord Byron

*Introduction:*

*When darkness rises in the East  
And man turns home from field and beast,  
The creatures of the night escape  
Their harnesses: jaw, skull and nape.  
You hear the pounding of the feet,  
Their orgy echoes in the street.  
The wise man stays secure in bed  
And never thinks to show his head  
The window through, or crack the door.  
The foolish greets the morning dead  
And serves Belial evermore.*

1.

The janissary's serrugee  
Drew in the reins so dextrously  
The carriage hardly swayed to stop.  
Outside the light was clear and weak,  
The rising sun not yet atop  
The minaret. I turned to speak,  
But Sulman shook his head and said,  
"First let the muzzein wake the dead."

The call rang out, the day began,  
The prayers were whispered man to man.  
Then janissary and Maltese,  
We stepped through grass that brushed our knees.  
"You must descend before the god  
Knows what you do." He pointed right,  
A rockier path than I had trod  
Since Darvell died that April night.  
I touched the ring that hung its weight  
Around my neck, inside my shirt.  
Its golden cool, its molten stone  
Had marked--I told myself--the bone  
Beneath the skin. At times I swear  
It beat as strongly as my heart,  
And in the baths the men would part  
And murmur when they saw it there  
Upon the chest of an infidel.

2.

What Darvell was I cannot tell:  
He claimed the English name by birth  
Though he lived elsewhere on the earth,

And why he gave good Malta's son  
The task I came here to have done  
I did not know. But Sulman kept  
Me to my oath. I woke and slept  
The final words I said before  
His flesh went dark, and the moon rose.  
That night we swore and dug and swore,  
Then Sulman laid him in the pose  
Of a sleeping child on his mother's bed.  
The earth lies light on certain dead.

3.

I followed Sulman with no doubt  
That where he stepped the ground was sure.  
Through sinking ship and bandits' rout,  
Through fever doctors could not cure,  
Through halls where Christian never trod  
He led me safe. And now like God  
Whose finger brands the forehead once  
And marks that man to forbidden haunts,  
He took me from the altars priests  
Still sanctify with holy feasts  
And showed me how one twisting trail  
Can circle half the earth, yet fail  
To snare the glance of anyone,  
Save him whose feet must trip upon  
It to its end. We wound our way  
Down, back and forth. Above, the day  
Grew hotter though we walked in the shade  
That broken crag and tensile bush  
Cast over us, a hell's arcade  
The wind yawed through, as though to push  
Damned spirits quicklier to His throne.  
But Satan too forsook the realm.

Soon Sulman smiled and took my arm  
And shoved me into cooler air:  
The grotto, moist where open sea  
Rolled in, and fern like angel hair  
Took root and blossomed lazily.  
"I wake you when the sun falls low,"  
He said. "Now sleep."  
The only home I know.

4.  
The fire is warm, the wind that leaps  
In on the waves is chill. I eat  
My fish and dream while Sulman sleeps.  
The yellow light, the red-blue heat  
Make of the grotto a snug retreat,  
While still the grinning ocean maw  
Recalls Augustus Darvell's jaw  
Gone slack in death. His final taunt  
The promise I keep: To seek this haunt  
Of gull and tern, midsummer's eve;  
Three times aloud to chaunt his name;  
To summon all my strength to heave  
His coraled ring back whence it came;  
To watch it swallowed by the black  
Uprising wave, then turn my back.

At midnight Sulman yawned and woke.  
We neither spoke, we neither spoke.  
We went as brothers side by side  
And stood above the incoming tide,  
Then to the wind that name I cried,  
And cried again, and yet once more.  
I hurled the ring and watched it soar  
In moonlit panoply above,

Then tumble to the arching wave.  
I stripped and touched the tender skin  
The ring had burned, then I dove in.  
The open light, the waves' assault,  
The promise kept: my life unbought.  
The dolphin that saved Arion  
From drowning was the cloudless moon  
That drew me up to air and life.  
I swam to shore where Sulman curled  
As crescent as a Turkish knife,  
And blood still spilled and welled and purled,  
But Sulman swam to another world.

5.

The janissary does not die  
Except at the hand of an enemy  
More fell than he. And few those be.  
Unless his sultan give command,  
He will not turn his own strong hand  
Against himself, no matter how  
Aghast the fight that brings him low.  
Yet Sulman lay on that stone shelf  
Above the waves, alone, one self,  
His fingers wet with sullen blood  
That shaped two letters: *A* and *D*.

6.

Since that wet night I curse the mood  
That draws me helpless to the sea.  
I sit the docks at Marsamxett  
And watch the watchmen pass each light  
Along the walls when the sun has set.  
I hear the snap of rope and pier,  
The kiss of oars as fishers clear



The waterbreak and cast full-deep.  
The owl might call; a restless pup  
Might mew in Sliema's rocky fields;  
A knight purrs as his woman yields  
In the dark beneath the bellied shields.

I heard, that night; I heard the rasp  
Of iron-shod heels on broken stone.  
Still floating in the ocean's clasp  
To soothe the burning in the bone  
Above my heart, I heard the rasp  
When scimitar and sternum meet.  
I heard the capering spectre-feet,  
The laugh that robs a mind of marvel:  
The whetsone cough of Master Darvell.

I yet am slim enough to look  
A student rapt into a book,  
An open mind that begs the flow  
The wise man of the ages know.  
My feet unshod to meet the waves,  
My loins wrapped as he who bathes  
The Mediterranean's placid lake,  
My shoulders brown as the sun can make,  
*A boy* the women name me till  
They see the darkness my eyes still  
Give up in noontime's brightest glare,  
The youthful torso black with hair,  
And then they cross themselves and stare,  
Or step into the dim arcade  
Where once the harem worked and played.  
But now the cobbler with his lath,  
The tanner and his uric bath,  
The smith whose anvil meets the blow

Of hammer on the steel below--  
All take the orders of the knights  
And clasp the safety of their rites.  
I turn and watch the hull that skates  
The shallow swell. Beneath it waits  
The nymph of ocean, cloud and snow;  
Beneath it, let Poseidon go;  
Beneath, where swim the murdered dead,  
Augustus Darvell rears his head.

7.

The sun in mummy wrappings smeared,  
The nearing night scirocco-queered,  
Hamrija's tower wrapped in moans  
Dead lips evoke from fluted bones.  
The pipers dip and stall on sand  
That mocks the pretense that the land  
Can rule the sea. The knights are bent  
To dice and cards, their element  
Far more than war in these late days.  
The waves that smash their salty haze  
On Fort St Elmo are quiet here,  
As though they know when he will appear.  
I finger through my shirt the welt  
That no one sees but I have felt  
Like Cain's emblazoned guarantee  
That seven men will die if they  
Dare raise a hand to threaten me.  
Augustus Darvell has his way.

8.

One year the beard more thickly grows,  
I feel the fur beneath my clothes,  
I leash the lunging hound that grips

Me when a woman's ankle shows;  
The pulse that wakes me never sleeps,  
The thorn that ravishes the rose.

Till me sweet Malta never knew  
That man and wolf were one made two.  
Two months I wore the cursed ring  
Against my heart and felt it sing  
A somber song of night and wind.  
I prayed and never knew I sinned.  
I feel the sinews' fresh release,  
The muscles' power to want and seize,  
The lungs expanding in my chest,  
Desire that drains, then gives me rest;  
The priest who feels his fingers burn  
In giving me the bread made man;  
The wine he spills, the blood that drips,  
The stole that inexplicably slips;  
The tide that sighs like one who mourns.  
And I yet wait till he returns.

9.

He will not come, I think, as one  
Who journeys till his work is done,  
Or pilgrim seeking faith's bequest  
In laying sin and shame to rest,  
Or vapid knight who apes the wall  
Until Mercanti's harlots call:  
Imagine ships that found their port  
Three thousand feet below the wave,  
And shadows of the dead that Fort  
Lascaris shelters in the grave--  
Or forms that flit behind the eye,  
And those who see them yearn to die.

10.

Beyond the fort, the rock breaks down  
Where waves assault it day and night.  
To walk there and escape the town  
Remains my one untouched delight.  
The fishers strike a deeper path;  
The bathers seek a calmer bath.  
I stand alone as I must be.  
The sun in setting shadows me  
Straight toward the open leagues of sea.  
That dark one snaps and shatters wide  
As Mother Moon lifts up the tide.  
Then sunset crowns the rotting waves,  
First gold, then black--and then she leaves.

I heard the footsteps on the shore  
Despite the surf's explosive burst.  
I stared, I stared but saw not the first  
Betrayal that he lived once more.  
His hands were cold, his cheeks were blue  
When Sulman dug the long night through,  
And as the shovel grasped the sand  
I knelt and prayed at his command,  
My words less holy than I knew  
If what I now accept is true.

I dream his pace through rock and drift,  
The ocean bed his footfalls shift,  
The rays that flit, the kelp that sways  
Away when he lifts up his gaze.  
*How can he live?* I think, though he  
Is in my dreams, but cannot be.

11.

I long to show my body bare--  
The muscles lean, the curling hair,  
The thickened root--and ask if there  
Is one young woman pleased to care,  
Or try to shield me with her cloak  
And gainsay what the others speak,  
Her hands like eyes discovering all  
I yearn to give. But till his soul  
Release me from the curse I earned  
When I swore that oath and that ring returned  
To the sullen sea, I am not whole,  
I am not free.

12.

I wake at dawn

To crying gulls, their quill-less spawn  
Agape for food. I watch the eel  
That from the darkness snaps his meal  
And then retreats. I wait the pace  
That cannot come, I think, by day.  
Another dozen hours of peace  
While the sun rolls its thoughtless way.

You will not number sparks that fly  
Upwards and vanish in the sky,  
Nor will you count the echoing tread  
Knights call the marching of the dead,  
Nor will you hear the damned arise  
And greet him with your waking eyes:  
It is to *me* that horror lies.

And turn: Augustus Darvell stands  
Behind you, barefoot on the sands.

His sodden shirt clings to his chest.  
You see his ribcage rise and rest.  
You smell the salt and know that he  
Has journeyed far within the sea  
While you, his son untimely got,  
Hide what you are to live uncaught.  
"Hide what you are. They must not know,"  
He says, "That you in freedom go.  
They must not see the shadows run  
Beneath you underneath the moon.  
They have no right to know the birth  
That makes you noble on the earth.  
The lust you feel their god denies  
Them, thus to keep them his one prize.  
Their sacraments may save their souls,  
But what are those? Unbodied ghouls.  
But you--" He holds the ring I hurled  
Away before I knew the world  
He gave me; holds it out to me.  
He does not see that I can see  
Before me Sulman on the ledge,  
The victim of his vassalage.  
I leap and as I fly across  
The fire, I number loss and loss  
And change my form to take his throat  
Between my teeth. Although he fought  
He did not win. And *that* surprise  
He found reflected in my eyes.

13.

Till me sweet Malta never knew  
That man and wolf were one made two,  
And never will sweet Malta see  
How wolf might live eternally.

The secret lies, like Darvell, deep  
Beneath the waves the mantas leap.  
And in the tomb where paupers sleep  
A ring is nestled with their bones.  
And quiet underneath the stones  
My memory of Sulman lies.  
But every moonlit night the skies  
Look down on one who freely runs  
Alone until the count of days  
Is full, and he is joined by sons.

*Excerpted from the novel August Darvell, still in preparation for the press.*



# ANEMONE SIDECAR

RAVENNA PRESS