

ANEMONE SIDE CAR

# Chapter 1 of The Anemone Sidecar

Cover by Daniel Boyer

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## Table of Contents

<i>Alain Robbe-Grillet</i>	4
Thomas Wooten	
p.s.	5
Richard Arnold	
<i>haiku</i>	6
Soren Gauger	
<i>from</i> The Cellar/Cellarium	7
M Sarki	
Forward: An Interview with God	10
Gavelkind	11
Peter Markus	
Mud Boys	12
The Moon is a Brother	13
Seth McMillan	
Decades of Romance	14
Sascha Akhtar	
Tribunal	15
<i>R. M. Rilke</i>	17
Duane Locke	
Peaceful Kingdom's Aubade	18
A Journal, Life in 2003	19
Brian Ames	
My Stillborn Brother's Life	20
Steve Mueske	
Nocturne	23
Wain Ewing	
Counterclockwise	24
<i>artwork</i>	26
Gryffyd Dempsey	
Atlantic City x 11	27
David Ayers	
Kenosis	28
Helder Granja	
dark red	30
Donald Ryburn	
Piedra	31
Jim McCurry	
39 Anns, Ruth and Tina	32
Pete Balestrieri	
nothing stops	33

<i>Gertrude Stein</i>	34
Marc Kipniss	
Fusiformation	35
Martin Hendrickson	
In the Beginning	36
Ian Hooper	
Demi-sonnet No. 11	37
Pasha Malla	
The Flattening Earth	38
<i>Max Jacob</i>	42
Jim Dewitt	
When Starlight Slides Across	43
Alison Daniel	
The Cult of Osiris	44
C.A. Conrad	
<i>she was exotic company...</i>	45
<i>Frank yawns...</i>	46
Stephen D. Rogers	
Electron Music	47
G.O. Clark	
Fortune Cookies	48
Andrew Topel	
The Doctor	49
<i>Italo Calvino</i>	52

When you said that the twin Vanessa  
devours the firebird at the end of the  
show, what did you mean by that?

- Alain Robbe-Grillet,  
from *La Belle Captive*

p.s. I just went to my shelves to pull off Mr. Cogito but I found in its place 'Monsieur Teste' by Paul Valery, which made me realize my mistake and think, ah-ha, so turning on my heel I went to the shelf I knew Mr. Cogito to live on and found Monsieur Songe' by Robert Pinget, which led me to come back here feeling slightly light-headed. But I know I have Mr. Cogito; I just don't know where the houndstooth he is.

p.p.s. I watched part of a documentary last night about a fascinating Florentine artist who is obsessed with string. We must look more closely at the world, I suspect.

**- Thomas Wooten**

opening the first  
encyclopedia  
selecting “April”

- *Richard Arnold*

*a fragment from*  
*The Cellar/ Cellarium*

Let us suppose that our narrator whom we have been accompanying thus far is suddenly revealed to be a university professor. How does this alter our understanding of the story? And if he is an ex-convict? A Catholic? A misanthrope? It is my intention to prove that these shall we say gaps, sometimes unintentionally filled in by the reader, do not exist until they are revealed to exist. Furthermore, information that is candidly supplied can at times contradict the implied story, or the actual narrative. This 'actual narrative' belongs wholly to the reader and is all that can be said to exist of the narrative proper. The role of the narrator, then, is to provide as little as possible interference with the greatest number of actual narratives. For example.

I had finally found the address among the piles of papers which never seemed more futile than when I was searching for something from amongst them... "I'll throw them all out tomorrow", I vowed to myself, and then to the papers, "Your days are numbered!" Do I need to confirm... have you already suspected... that all of the papers were written in the same handwriting? The corners all bent due to the same nervous habit, a tick or twitch?

I folded the address twice in half and then slipped it into my back pocket. The sun was setting more quickly than usual, and I wasn't certain of where I was headed (the address was in an unfamiliar part of town), but it seemed to me that I would need half an hour to get there. I set out westerly, having to avert my eyes from the unpleasantries of the sun at the horizon. Every time I thought to look, the silhouettes of a dozen or so birds were being tossed to and fro by a wind said to be coming from the mountains.

How long had I been walking before I saw that I was being followed? Between five and seven minutes. What was my most immediate reaction? A quickening of the heart, an attempt to maintain a natural composition of the face and gait. The latter belonging to the voluntary class of movements. Describe the figure appearing to be in pursuit. Rather too shadowy to provide a suitable description, but wearing heavy-soled shoes which made a clattering sound whenever he scurried out of sight, into an alcove of this or that building.



I should mention that my nerves had already been adversely affected by the goings-on in my apartment building. I had originally lived on the fourth floor, and indeed resided there in some comfort for a number of years. But then about four months ago I had started to sense the chill. At first I had taken it to be a strangely persistent draught, not at all an unreasonable hypothesis for late November. And so I took to double-sealing the windows, stuffing old sweaters into the cracks under the doors, taping plastic bags over the ventilation openings. Yet somehow the chill always persisted, as though seeping in from all directions, as though somehow the walls themselves were cold. For a time I tried to be indifferent to it, but I found that I could not shake the sensation that the chill was slowly penetrating the outer layers of my skin, leaving a dead epidermic shell, and gradually breaching the tegument altogether and occupying the flesh, the bones, moving in to conquer the heart. A week later I had moved to a nearly identical apartment on the seventh floor.

You can imagine my horror, then, to find that the chill in the new apartment was even more intense than that of the previous. This cold came to occupy my thoughts at all times, everything I did was painted in frosty blue or damp grey. My friends wearied of hearing me talk about the problem and so I was compelled to stop mentioning it, for fear that they would start to think me obsessive or mad. Then I was quite literally alone with the bestial cold, and it was all I could do to move a third time, now to the sixteenth and uppermost floor.

When I truly understood the depths of the all-piercing numbness that fell upon me in that sixteenth-floor apartment, I came to long for the merely unsettling chill of the fourth floor. This newest cold affected me at very nearly every level of my emotional and physical being. And when I finally entered the relative solace of a chattering sleep, it pursued me in my dreams, whether personified as a spectral, bone-white child with patches of hair missing and dressed in silks, or simply felt as a lurking presence behind whatever improbable dream facade I had thrown up. But I say 'very nearly' every level, for there was somewhere a part of my mind that was yet mercifully unaffected, fiddling at the miniature Pompei-effect that was consuming the remainder of my body.

And I surmise that this part that categorically refused to relent was the actual source of the suffering, and not the chill itself, for without it I would have had nothing to contrast with. Therefore, to soothe my 1% I took to frequent strolling, and delighted in the temporary thawing of the tips of my digits in the paper-thin air of the False Spring.

It was on one of these strolls along boulevards built in gentler eras that I hit upon the solution to my problem. It had such a natural, crystalline ring of truth to it that I could not believe that I hadn't come up with it sooner. I had been moving higher, ever higher in the building, and accordingly the chill had intensified. Therefore, it stood to provisional reason that on the first floor the chill would be at its least powerful, and altogether negated in the cellar. My head swam at the elegant simplicity of my solution. I began smiling, and even tipped my hat to an attractive woman, who merely blushed in response.

Yet a tangle persisted.

An old man was living alone in the only cellar apartment, an unsightly one-room box with pipes erupting out of the walls and a vague mouldering smell, the elusive source of which the building superintendant had been trying to locate for years. The aesthetic shortcomings of the place amounted to disagreeable trifles, but of more serious and immediate concern was the old man. He had been living in the place for almost thirty-seven years and harboured a resolute determination to die in the room where he had waited out with equal stubbornness the latter installment of his life's chronicle.

Despite this setback, I felt certain that my obstinacy at that juncture could find no parallel. Even on my four-times-daily walks, my mind's confabulations scarcely wandered from the riddle of how to separate the old man from his suite. My conclusion, again, had a certain simplicity to it; first, I would try to bribe him. Failing that, I would do my best to trick him. Only as a final resort would I kill him.

- *Soren Gauger*

Forward: *An Interview with God*

I remember winter's  
river being lunar  
and frigid. My

tip-ups drowning  
under the clime of  
icy domes. Those

wily pike beneath  
them smiling as if  
they had it better

than I did up here.

- *M Sarki*

Gavelkind

In reverse she will fasten her bra and turn to look at her face in the mirror. What follows is sorrow looking down the frame to the last button on her blouse. There she decides to remove them; the blouse, the bra, and everything else her life is made of. She steps into the cast iron and reminds herself that her mother knitted, not out of duty, but to demonstrate that it was she who was in charge.

- *M Sarki*

## Mud Boys

At night, with eyes set toward the river's muddy shore, two brothers run stride in stride with each other, with rusty buckets hanging from their mud clenched fists, in boots mud skinned from all those other nights that came before this night, like this, the mud boys come. You can hear them coming long before you see them, the hollow thud of metal banging up against the bony boy hip of bone. Oh these boys of mine, they are muddy eyed, mud making, muddy mucking brothers. These boys are boys who look good in mud. In the muddy eyes of these two muddy brothers, to them the world is nothing but mud and brother, river and fish. And moon. And I am what they uncovered one night when, down on their hands and knees, with shovel eyes digging under the mud, one brother turned and mouthed a sound to the other, a sound that was the sound of girl. Say G-I-R-L. The brother who made the sound pick-ed up a stick and wrote, into the mud, the word this sound made. I am what rose up from the mud, up from the word, the rivers this word, it created. I am Girl. Do you see? See these mud brothers I am talking about: these boys can see. These boys see the mountains that are buried under the mud. These boys see the moons ship wrecked at the bottom of the river. These boys see and these boys know, that the moon, it is a mirror, it is a light house, it is a star. And I am the girl these brothers made out of mud—I am the mud they named Girl. Oh, these boys, they are all mine. Listen: hear them come now from a long ways off, the bang of metal banging up against hip and knob of bone, the tambourined sound of rusty, bent back nails jangling inside of lint filled trousered pockets, there where other boys stash jacks and jack knives, nickels and dimes, a bike lock's key. Oh, those boys of mine—they need no nickel dime jack knife, they need no bike lock key. My heart, it is a bicycle for these brothers to pump and pedal, to ride across this dirty river, to rise across that muddy rivered sky.

- *Peter Markus*

## The Moon Is A Brother

Moon, Girl says, because Girl knows that us brothers we like the sound that moon makes.  
Moon is like brother.  
Us brothers perk up our ears.  
We look up.  
We nod with our heads.  
We move in closer into Girl.  
Moon, we say.  
Moon.  
We say it twice.  
We say, about the moon, because this is a thing we've been both of us thinking,  
What if there were two?  
Girl says, to our what if?—  
Let's go see.  
We sit back and watch Girl go see.  
We see Girl get down in the mud to make a second moon. She begins by making a mud ball  
that she rolls around in the mud until it is big enough in her palm's hand to place in the sky  
right beside the other moon made out of moonbeams and lighthouse lights and eyeballs no  
longer used for seeing.  
See this moon.  
It is muddy.  
The moon born before it—it is a mongrel; it is not made out of mud.  
There, Girl says, after this moon made out of mud sticks like mud to the star glittery sky.  
Good.  
Now there are two.  
See these moons.  
See these two moons eye each other from across this starry eyed sky.  
This sky is a river bobbing with stars.  
And the moons? The moons are brothers floating face up in a muddy river sky.  
Hear the first moon hiss at its muddy brother: This is my sky. This is my river.  
Listen to this river's moony music: dualing banjos hammer picked by the hands of stars.  
We shake our heads.  
Our heads are lifted by the chinny chin high.  
Girl's head is a sun spinning.  
  
And the moons above us, the brothers other than us, burn with Girl's light.

- *Peter Markus*

## *Decades Of Romance*

The road is not well. The shortcomings of the traveler seeps on his ancestors, as they squat slovenly in the ditch, eating the newly mowed grass, their eyes half-shut and beards busy as

grandfather clocks. No one really cares. When you break the posturing down you can see it on the face. The fake smile is like regurgitated peas. I also, was simulated, until I became a mail deliverer and bore paper

dreams for the fake smile folk. They take my mail in fist and temporarily remodel themselves, opening their bills and waving dollars away, taking personal letters and savoring them, sometimes throwing them away, crooning over money, if proffered, opening

each and every valued envelope like a carnivore: I do not eat what I cannot have, but sometimes I wonder what is inside these gems of things, what is brewing in there--having served these carnivores are they truly grateful? -- So I hit another house and keep walking.

- *Seth McMillan*

## Tribunal

Fortune arrives wedded  
by the bell  
I cannot  
calm her down  
she screams  
of an abcess  
in her gums  
I tell her to sit on the bench  
and drink some tea  
a vision awaits me  
my friend has engaged  
the rain to play at his funeral  
he says not to worry  
the marching band  
will be along shortly

In the basket are june bugs  
waiting to pounce  
on picknickers hungry  
for egg salad sandwiches  
and pickled herring  
a congress of dervishes  
is gathering under the  
silver birches while  
bankers die of botulism  
in the park



Overhead in the elm tree  
one scarlet tanger starts  
to sing announcing  
a chopine race  
the wizened organ grinder  
lurches a scherzo  
baring his gums  
in a leaking smile  
at the sky  
while tap-dancing  
across the green

A plastic hand reaches out of  
the perambulator and  
looks at me askance  
I have no milk  
so I ask the vegetarian cineaste  
next to me  
does he have any?  
the mother runs over  
with a bag of durians  
and a chocolate cigar  
gives us a dirty look  
and pops out her breast  
veined like Stilton  
and I wonder perhaps breasts  
do become cheese after a time.

- *Sascha Akhtar*

It began as a meal. And became a  
feast, a festival—they hardly knew  
how.

- R. M. Rilke,  
from *The Lay of the Love and Death*  
of Cornet Christoph Rilke, translated  
by Stephen Mitchell

## Peaceful Kingdom's Aubade

Dawn is a water drum,

Splashes outside inform it is morning,  
Pelicans  
Splash through cloud-shadowed blues  
On a surface of azures.

Down the beach a chalky atmosphere,

To the right seen through chalk are six white houses,  
Each looks like a gigantic ghost crab,  
Each with a fat raccoon under the floor.  
To the left, one white mouse,  
A mouse that starved himself  
So he could crawl through the cage's bars,  
But now on white beach sand,  
The white mouse is fat and a dazzling white.

- *Duane Locke*

*A Journal, Life In 2003*

The eggs in the nests  
Of newspapers  
Will hatch dark glasses.  
After six years of riding  
Around in convertibles  
The dark glasses  
Will hatch blue eyes.

The blue eyes  
Will be stuck in slot machines  
So wheels will spin  
And stop to signify looses,  
Except when a few photographs  
Are dropped to fall  
To the floor by the feet.

A mourning band  
Of a black shoe string  
Will be worn  
Around the arm,  
But the wrist watch  
Will only tell  
What time it is  
On the moon.

**- Duane Locke**

## My Stillborn Brother's Life

*Batter my heart, three-personed God; for you  
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;  
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend  
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.*

—John Donne, *from Holy Sonnet XIV*, 1633

These many pictures people don't look at.  
A stack of small, private sins.  
His life lived within the boundaries of these frames.  
Is he, could he be, in Heaven?

### *Huntington Beach, California:*

There is an angel in the form of a seahorse that hovers behind him. Water spills from its mouth. My stillborn brother sits under an umbrella in the shade. Just in its penumbra, it is not possible to tell whether his suitcoat is charcoal or navy, but his tie is definitely red. A handkerchief rises from his breast pocket. The fingers of his right hand curl around the stem of an empty wine glass. Couples around him wonder why he is alone. A waiter moves in his direction. Nothing on any of their faces, nor on his. The seahorse angel spills water from a mosaic nest – its arc is the segment of a perfect parabola. It is 1997, it's partly cloudy at the beach. Are we really headed for another world war? (Their necks are bent inquisitively; a woman wears a string of pearls.) The waiter sports a necktie, too.

Somewhere on the other side of this sea, night-vision interprets everything through a weird skein of milky green. This means that there has been a spectacular failure in policy.

Six years have passed since then and he would be thirty-nine, almost forty.

*Newburgh, New York*

The single lounge at Newburgh's airport is not large and doesn't have my stillborn brother's favorite brand of gin.

Nonetheless, the blond boy behind the bar has mixed what they have with tonic water and ice, squeezed a burst from a plastic lemon-juice dispenser, and placed it before him on the counter. My stillborn brother's carryon – with his computer, blood-pressure prescription, and a three-quarters-finished Scott Turow novel inside – leans against his feet. There is the white noise of weary travelers complaining in the terminal behind him.

Feet scuffling across linoleum.

The odor of aviation fuel and gin and cigarettes, because the citizens of New York haven't yet banned smoking from their public places.

Even my stillborn brother is tempted to light up in a place such as this.

All of this in a picture of faceless people, slightly askew, above the instant coffee maker in a ground-floor room at the Extended Stay America on I-87.

*Berkeley, Missouri*

A dot-picture of a woman rendered in a style of the Pointillists. She may be someone's mother. In fact, she may be my stillborn brother's mother. She has the hollow spot-visage of heart-shattering loss. Behind the eyes a roaring emptiness that cannot be filled with anything but a dead son's life.

How could this have happened? How could this have happened? How could this have happened? Her specked portrait seems to ask this question many times. Behind her the print is dark except for the slightest suggestion of a small luminosity at upper left – just next to the hair tucked behind her left ear.

This lie that light always shall overcome darkness.

This lie that darkness has not understood it.

This lie that love conquers everything.

These lies.

*Cliffdale, Washington*

My stillborn brother, the fornicator, begs for forgiveness.

For he has gazed upon the portrait of a lovely woman and become enhorned. See them, curling like a ram's from his hairline, just there – above his scalp? See the carmine tail flick away the incessantly buzzing flies? And the oiled tongue, forked as it laps lewdly? The nails of his slick fingertips that curl into talons? The slitted pupils at the center of the twin stone rings that serve for his portals?

The eyes are the windows to the soul. How many times have we been told this?

In the portrait, the woman is reclining in a fecund garden. All about her are climbing vines, blood-red pots, turned soil, the brilliant petals of cultivated flowers. She has a trowel in one fist, a small aerating spade in another, and a secateur – blades winking at the ready – on a small table beside her.

Still life with garden shears.

It could be that it these awful implements are intended for twisting in my stillborn brother's gut.

*Solomons, Maryland:*

In my father's house there are many rooms. One of them has a queen-sized bed whose mattress sags with the weight of loneliness. The person who lays his or her head here has only a bitter resentment for a faith.

Night after night my stillborn brother would have been on the road – a “road warrior,” they would call him. The picture hanging above this bed shows a beckoning deity on the other side of a closed door. Within this frame, this god says one thing and does another.

It is a spook that refuses to deliver.

Fruit in the garden for everyone but my stillborn brother.

He knocks on the door in the picture – it is a welcoming red, red, red. But the sounds of his rapping echo off of empty walls.

A doppelgänger will show you the candy but take it away.

It is well known that a doppelgänger holding a newborn baby visited John Donne, the English poet, preacher and metaphysicist, whilst he was away from home on a visit to Paris.

It was not his, but a wraith of Anne More, his pregnant wife.

But this apparition was not a harbinger of happiness. Rather, it was infinitely sad. For at the exact moment the doppelgänger appeared to Donne, his wife – back home in England – had birthed a dead child.

- Brian Ames

## Nocturne

Down from the moist air  
a brood on far limb folds  
leathery wings, theirs

a sympathetic world built  
from the echoes of the given.  
There is talk of sleep

but sleep is elsewhere.  
The rugs in God's outer chamber  
are full of luminous beggars

speaking with tongues  
of pale light. Silver foxes  
wait in the ink-blue

afterimage of moon,  
hungry for moles, willing to learn  
and relearn where the holes

in the labyrinth are. Above,  
crook-necked owls  
hoot about the lesser concerns

of meadows and barns,  
fields, play. Eyes of tubers  
grope through damp loam.

Beside them, the gnarled fingers  
of the root witch, reading  
the rich braille of earth.

- *Steve Mueske*



## Counterclockwise

Neighborhood dawn  
mills round mulish  
counterclockwise.  
The chair—  
why blindered?  
—a cube of wood.  
Clockwise wants to know  
how to sign its name  
twice and the same.  
counterclockwise  
what mote flicks out  
the lighthouse beam.

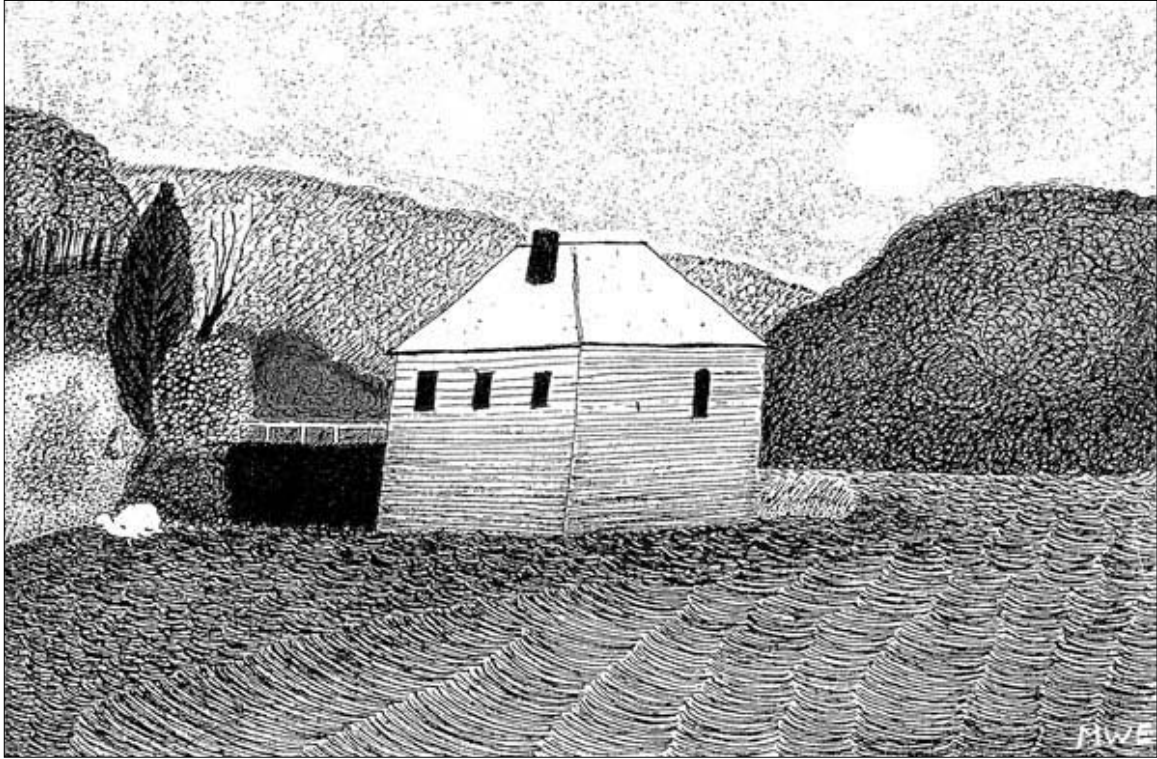
Meantime at the rim of a hole  
punched through the salt heart  
what gnaws away an ache  
disappears in coolness. Naked twice  
crossed the abandoned freeway  
upward into forest terraces  
of leveling stone.  
At the edge of a turquoise swimming pool  
the cranky / exuberant children  
again defend me.  
Again  
I rotate left  
with neither “brotherhood”  
by my side.

Portable concrete mixer  
stumbles firmly  
rolling up the roll back stone  
in air misted of satanic monotony.  
Liquid eyes float;  
mallet busted concrete . . .  
particles of light  
in the dark.  
Watery ink wave  
sheds a dorsal thorn  
when polarity without pay  
refutes its advertisement.

The psyche, floundering,  
has an egg-shape  
at her center.  
O how the noon bow  
arrows night.  
(May cupidity navigate its voyage  
with accuracy.)  
O how night twine hums  
“The Day of the Egg” . . .  
struck and consuming what delights  
in concern for her health.

Centuries below  
on a revolving planet  
a wooden bookshelf  
formed the pedestal beneath  
night radio’s serial revision  
assembled to the curve  
of her labor.  
That shelf now aimed  
toward a bath of witch hazel and black ice  
patent cure of sunburned blood.  
Thick drops of cold water  
bead the spigot of her bath . . .  
All is in readiness yet  
I find no lullaby tonight.  
Terrible  
that rugs have been removed.  
Looking across childhood’s bedroom  
we see doors gone,  
replaced by wooden panels,  
and are blessed not only  
by what eludes us.

- *Wain Ewing*



- *Wain Ewing*

## *Atlantic City x 11*

On a tear he said from Atlantic City  
Although we've not been there yet no not guilty  
we are still pretty sure it stinks the way you  
leave a bar at three in the morning or two  
and the stench of beer is not all that lingers  
nor vile scotch also random foulings on curbs  
and diesel and weaving passing cars and smoke  
and you stumbling along weary drunk and broke  
He never sent us any kind of picture  
or postcard so we have to guess and aren't sure  
It came to us he died just this noon in bed  
We rolled over coughed decided to be dead

- *Gryffyd Dempsey*

## Kenosis

or goodbye belief. Say it,  
Tata, and enjoy. Say truth.  
Say it with a measure of calamity—  
a conflagration of wet and dry, a burial  
of high and low. A grave, for shame.  
Say things like, I have the wind let out.  
I have lost sailors. I have, have, blundered.  
No one expects it to make sense.

Now,  
into a story, where, behind you, monuments  
rise from the past and your episodes.  
In this one, Neptune is attempting murder,  
(Nobody) means you  
and we (could ask) but  
we won't. The beach is  
made sandy. just for that purpose.  
Don't be nice, you have to survive.

On the beach alone sometimes  
Beware they'll light fires  
warn neighbors Hurry

Don't look

Hurry you have the wind let out.  
Don't look you have monsters  
called by name. You should  
not have to run far.

Run don't walk to the nearest ditch.

Lay down      you have  
Lay down      under you

                 full Wind.      Nobody  
says  
Come              we want this      Nobody  
we want you  
by the bed.      Beside    our things.      Nobody

listen,  
had answers, open-mouthed, windy  
when you asked    from the mast, knots  
apart,    still lashed to the bag but not  
invisible

(broken mast, ripped knots, fair warning)

Nobody did it, Nobody      echoed  
sea of stones mashed      neatly killing  
the men but No you said  
not yet                      No  
you wept  
for Penelope, the sirens  
and climbed down.

- *David Ayers*

dark red

Looking at white feet  
nesting on neatly coloured bed at night  
eyelids suddenly open at beautiful objects;

the inheritance of ties  
received ideas, recognisable forms  
"be nice to the lady at the door!"

It has always been so  
through the commonplaces of our view,  
culturally despised, modestly behaved  
like a dusty steamship statue inside locked windows  
kept;

but i remember once  
(sprayed on the crummy kitchen floor)  
being indecorously swept  
by a light stream of dark red jelly

slaloming my belly  
dripping into my hand

and of useless market value.

- *Helder Granja*

Piedra

*"...It comes and goes soundlessly through my memories..."*  
- Octavio Paz, *Interior Star*

On this last evening *Piedra* shines,

Dark Rilkean angels failed to appear on old shores,

White light,

Remembrance,

*"It was her silent footfalls, her constant anger, these were the precedence of death. I recall there was a music in her shining and a compassion for love that estranged itself from all gods, all protectors. Perhaps days did indeed become years or kabalistic infinities with the slashing of arms, thighs, and the piercing howls of unexpected silence. What ending?"*

Within the resurrection of mountains, fields of red poppies,

I searched snowy egrets for a Focaultian tongue,

Something pure white to hold onto,

Found instead an ancient, iridescent quetzal,

Who recounted holocaust dates on extant Mayan calendars,

Spoke in its unique, individual language, *"El quetzal esté mudo de ser tan hermosa"* \*

Schools of giant, golden fish flew by,

*Piedra* mourned morning and its birthdays.

- **Donald Ryburn**

*\*"The quetzal is mute because it is so beautiful"* Carlos Pellicer, *Fire Song*



### *39 Anns, Ruth and Tina*

Ann Who Knew Giotto  
Ann Who Loves Cimabue  
Ann Who Knows Cocoa  
Ann Who Fixes Broken Zippers  
Ann of the Snow Cave Hermits  
Ann of the Endless Anniversary  
Riveter Annie  
Ann Who Walks Foxes on Their Leashes  
Ann Who Has No Enemy  
Ann of the Mums & Cabbages  
Ann of Red Oaks  
One Eyed Ann  
Ann of the Pleides  
Trice Born Ann  
Ann Who Remembers the Armistice  
Ann of the Inner Flame  
Ruth  
Tina  
Roseanne  
Ann Who Trains Bears in Their Table Manners  
Ann Pembroke  
Ann Hutchcroft  
Ann Murdoch  
Ann with the Truffel Hunting Pigs  
Ann of Blueberry Lane  
Ann of the Undaunted Lighthouse  
Midwife Annie  
Ann Who Frowns at Revivalists  
Ann of the Hoarse Whispers  
Ann of Annawan Farms  
Ann of Capricorn Farm  
Ann of the Thimble  
Ann Who Dances with Fireflies  
Ann of the Mint & the Sage  
Ann of the Two Score Cats  
Ann of the Willows  
Ann of the Emetic Arts  
Ann of the Thousand Tears  
Ann of the Needle  
Ann of the Unbroken Heart

**- Jim McCurry**

nothing stops

nothing stops plunderers of the zoological park unless frantic clocks of sacking that it goes the animals of Baghdad of the lions nothing that the leopards with hunger of the animals of Baghdad of the park zoological of the lions of the Iraqi load without urging on of the bird cage shady of the tigers surrounded producing the liquid American animals for the feeding of the fight of the soldiers of the zoological park of Baghdad of the heart of the palace that the lion of if launching do not wound animals of the zoological war of the park of Iraq pleads the MP of Joined Kingdom that it prevents possible better to hit usual Iraqis that bombs incursions the necessity thinks of the creatures on the zoological park of EL-ZAWRA of Baghdad thinks of the creatures the zoological park of EL-ZAWRA of Baghdad does not wound animals of the zoological war of the park of Iraq prevents possible better to hit usual Iraqis that they bomb incursions the necessity thinks of the creatures the necessity of the zoological park of EL-ZAWRA of Baghdad thinks of the zoological park of EL-ZAWRA of Baghdad of the creatures

- *Pete Balestrieri*

If there is a river and it is known that it is filled with water and that the water is flowing faster when there is more water it is very easy to see that more water flows into the river and that the water in the river is running along faster very much faster as there is very much more water in the river.

And then likewise.

....

Lucy church may be one of those who were not on this side. She certainly is and very many may be who can say very many very many may be very many may be. A river separates water and so it should. A river separates water and so it should.

- Gertrude Stein,  
from Lucy Church Amiably

## Fusiformation

The shape is blue, or red and yellow. But the texture has no consistency: rough gives way to dappled then to that of flagrant wax. Glass might glimmer so, as well as the night, when sound travels. Other movements include a gesture toward birds, and after they lose their feathers spring curtains, the flowers wince, a scent is sent away.

An earthy flavor sheds seeds of light that sprout forth in chiaroscuro. To contrast elsewhere brings too much sensation, like any organized system of forgetting. Therefore one should remember to elate.

One could also share by narrowing at the middle, then emanating apart amid random curvets. Then a taper in the extremities would lead to the triumph of altruism. Then again, a discourse on spindles could account for the rest of the population. If only I believed in them!

Shaving requires a mirror envelope and paper. The paper is to write on, and to collect small hairs like iron filings with. Unless a magnet would be better. Unless I mean erasure pills.

If the reflection doesn't work, turn the mirror around and look for stamps while swallowing the pills. Philately is not a sex act.

- *Marc Kipniss*

## *In The Beginning*

A conference on Linguistic Origins was interrupted yesterday by the announcement of a startling discovery in the Lake Turkana region of northern Kenya. A team of scientists claims to have unearthed evidence of a primitive consonant among artifacts and bones of Australopithecene man. What appeared at first to be 3 unrelated lines of differing length protruding from the rock, when properly assembled, clearly formed an upper case F, the report said.

The literary community was quick to cite this as the 'missing link' between the older T excavated from Olduvai Gorge and the more developed M found among the footprints of the Laetoli stream beds. Though the evolutionary tree of grammar contains several unrelated branches, this discovery confirms the theory that gradual consonant mutation, by adding a line here and there, preceded sentence growth in the evolution of bipedal language.

The linguistic fossil record is replete with inconsistencies, claim biblical scholars, particularly in the assertion that the ancient scriptural word for God, YAWEH, is merely an advanced arrangement of fossil lines. The ancient prophets were not only divinely inspired, they claim. they also already possessed God's gift of clear pronunciation.

Fundamentalist grammarians point out the numerous hoaxes committed by evolutionary linguists, such as the "Vowel of Verdun" in which an excavated A turned out to be nothing more than another H with the sides repositioned; and the infamous Piltdown double consonant, where two Vs were put together to appear to form a W. Just as Eve was formed from Adam's rib, they maintain, God created the alphabet to serve man.

In a survey of recently published scientific reports, the origin of intelligible words has been attributed by paleoetymologists to the middle paleolithic epoch with the last migration of the modern vowel out of Africa some 80,000 years ago. One source explains: "Though alphabetically outnumbered by consonants, they may have contributed to the extinction of Neanderthals. Imagine, if you will, a woolly mammoth trapped at a cliff edge by a group of Neanderthals yelling 'jump!' without the benefit of a lower case 'u' in their vocabulary. Along comes a Cro-Magnon who clearly yells 'jump!' and...well, the implications are profound."

- *Martin Hendrickson*

Demi-sonnet No. 11

Applied once for a job in Singapore.  
Never heard back, but for a while, such  
lovely daydreams.

I want to be your Singapore

- *Ian Hooper*

## The Flattening Earth

The first thing to disappear was the booty girl's bosom. She came home one night, having just broken up with her boyfriend – a boyfriend who lived by the ocean and whose dogs, the booty girl often claimed, seemed to be more a priority than her. The boyfriend had merely shrugged at this accusation, then continued stroking the smooth pelts of the two Rottweilers at his side.

Slamming the door of her apartment behind her, the booty girl removed her tube top, and was horrified to discover her chest as smooth and flat as a tabletop. She lay down in her bed gawking up at her naked self in the mirrored ceiling. Indeed, her breasts – those perfect, silicone globes – were gone. The booty girl began sobbing, and eventually had to ingest a fistful of pills before she could fall asleep.

The next morning she rushed to her doctor, reasoning that something had only gone wrong with her implants. Perhaps they had burst. The booty girl imagined the saline fluid snaking its way in rivulets through her body, the torn husks that had contained them lying like two withered balloons around her heart. She shuddered, and floored the accelerator of her Ford Mustang.

The booty girl's doctor was perplexed. His name was Ralph. He was a plastic surgeon and almost a millionaire. He called plastic surgery his "art".

Ralph did a number of tests, but found nothing conclusive.

"Maybe someone stole them," Ralph offered.

"Stole them?" cried the booty girl. She was incredulous.

"Hmm," said Ralph, running his hand over the barren plain of the booty girl's chest.

"Fuck you," said the booty girl. She put her shirt back on and stormed out of Ralph's office.

Ralph spent the rest of his day drawing on human skin with a magic marker and then carving into people like jack o' lanterns. He lifted faces, did jobs on noses, nipped and tucked and implanted and chopped.

Then it was five o'clock and time for Ralph to go home. He put on his coat and left the office, waving distractedly at his secretary – a black woman named Doreen, a woman whose skin colour made Ralph feel terrifically progressive to have her in his employ – and went out into the parking lot. Ralph was shocked to discover all four of the tires of his BMW completely flat. He knelt down on the asphalt and examined them closely. There was no evidence of slashing, only the rubber pooling unscathed and tar-like around the silver hubcaps. Ralph produced a cellular telephone from his jacket pocket and called Doreen.

"I'm in the parking lot," said Ralph.

"Hi," said Doreen. She could see him out the window. She waved. "I can see you."

“Listen, someone’s let the air out of my tires. Do you think you could give me a lift home?”

“Yeah,” said Doreen. “For sure.”

At a quarter to six, Doreen dropped Ralph off at his house in the suburbs. Doreen politely declined the five dollars he offered for gas money, then peeled out of her boss’s driveway in a cloud of dust. She was preoccupied: Doreen sang in a choir whose nightly rehearsals began promptly at 7:00. Singing was something she took very seriously, and punctuality even more so. Doreen raced home, heated up a frozen dinner for her daughter, then flew promptly back out the door, concerned she might be late for practice.

Doreen arrived just as the choir was finishing warm-up. She stole silently into her regular place between a robust tenor named Claudio and one of her fellow altos, a fidgety, nervous woman named Beth. The conductor, a silver-haired, vitriolic matron named Ms. Vanderkamp, nodded curtly at Doreen. Ms. Vanderkamp announced the name of the piece they would be singing, then thrust her arms to the heavens, her wrists undulating in a theatrical flourish.

The choir poised itself. Ms. Vanderkamp’s hands plummeted and everyone launched into the hymn. The first few notes swelled, joyful and raucous. Conversely, two bars in, when the altos’ part began, the sound Doreen produced was horrendous – a dissonant, awful noise that shocked everyone into silence. The choir paused, completely stunned: Doreen was renowned for her beautiful voice. Her solos often provoked standing ovations. This musical miscue, then, was most alarming. Ms. Vanderkamp glared at Doreen.

“Geez, I’m sorry,” said Doreen.

Ms. Vanderkamp merely shook her head, then raised her arms. “Again,” she commanded.

The choir resumed, and once more Doreen’s voice cut through the rise of melody like the atonal squawk of some wretched, dying bird. She looked shamefully at her shoes.

“I don’t know what’s wrong with me,” said Doreen.

“You’re flat,” said Ms. Vanderkamp. “Perhaps you’ve a frog in your throat, dear.”

Doreen, at a total loss, lipsynched her way through the remainder of rehearsal while the rest of the choir belted out number after number. Doreen was ashamed. Nothing like this had ever happened to her before. After rehearsal Doreen was accosted by Ms. Vanderkamp in the parking lot.

“Let’s hope this clears up before next Sunday,” Ms. Vanderkamp said.

“I must be coming down with something,” Doreen replied, then added quickly: “But I’m sure it’ll pass.”

Ms. Vanderkamp said nothing, only cast a disparaging glance in Doreen’s general direction, and then headed off to unlock her bicycle from the side of the building.



Ms. Vanderkamp's home was on the other side of town, which itself was built on a series of hills and valleys. The route she usually took undulated its way through subdivisions, the road rising and falling in black waves that glistened silver in the moonlight. She would pedal her bicycle uphill with icy resolve, her eyes narrowed into slits of concentration; once past the apex she would coast down noiselessly – a stealthy, silent wisp through the night, fingers poised over the handbrakes.

Ms. Vanderkamp moved out onto the road. The first big hill was only a block and a half away; she began to gather speed, her spindly legs pumping, urging the bike forward. But when she arrived where she would normally have begun her ascent, the hill had disappeared: the road stretched flat and straight ahead, the usual great bulge having presumably sunk into the earth. Ms. Vanderkamp proceeded cautiously, wary of potential earthquakes. Meanwhile, Claudio, the tenor, was pulling his sports utility vehicle into the town's hockey arena. His son Andy played for the local AA Bantam team, and their game times coincided exactly with Claudio's choir practices.

Andy was in fact waiting for his father outside the arena. He was a stocky, sullen boy, notorious throughout the league for his dirty stick work in front of the net. Andy hopped up into the SUV and threw his bag into the back.

"How'd you do?" asked Claudio.

His son sat scowling out the window, silent.

"That well, huh?"

Claudio pulled out of the parking lot and started heading for home. After a few more minutes of silence, Andy finally spoke:

"Coach says we were flat."

"Flat?"

"Yeah."

"How so?"

"I don't know. Just flat."

Andy reached over and turned on the radio, fishing around the dial until he found a station whose music he knew would sufficiently irritate his father.

Also at this time, Beth, the anxious alto, was walking home to her nearby basement apartment. The neighbourhood was dark and still, with only the blue flicker of a television set through the occasional window indicating any sign of life. Beth, who worked part-time as both air traffic controller and 911 call receiver, found these nighttime walks soothing amidst the frantic pace of her life.

Soon enough Beth was home, and she crept down the concrete steps that led to her door. It was barely past nine o'clock, and still Beth was wary of waking her upstairs neighbour, a man she only knew as someone who owned a pair of menacing black dogs. She let herself into her apartment and, without turning on any lights, proceeded to the kitchenette. There she removed a bottle of beer from her refrigerator with which she sat down at the table in the dark.

Beer was Beth's one vice. Men who courted her were often surprised by her penchant for lager – on dates she often polished off two or three pints before dinner arrived. Beth was a slender, lithe little thing, and her beer consumption belied any notions of demureness potential suitors might have had about her.

So now, it was with great relish that Beth twisted the cap off her beer. But something, she realized immediately, was wrong; it took her an instant to realize what: there had been no crisp gassy explosion, no hiss of carbonated air released sparkling and clean from the bottle. Beth hesitated, then took a sip. Flat. The beer was tepid – totally flat. Beth took another sip, then stood up and poured the beer out into the kitchen sink.

The ex-boyfriend sat with his dogs on the couch. He stared blankly at the television, considering his downstairs neighbour as romantic potential. She seemed flighty, but had a cute quiet way about her the ex-boyfriend found endearing. He sighed.

"Alright dogs," he said, slapping the two Rottweilers on the haunches. "Let's go for a walk."

Outside the night air was cool and brisk. The ex-boyfriend began wishing he had brought a coat. It would be especially cold at the beach where he liked to let his dogs off their leads. But once the dogs were out of the house, there was no getting them back inside until they felt they had had a full, solid run.

After a few minutes walk the ex-boyfriend and the Rottweilers arrived at a wooded area at the edge of his subdivision. Just beyond these trees was the ocean, the smell of which hung salty and heavy in the air. Before that there was the beach, ruled by the neighbourhood canines and their respective defecations. The ex-boyfriend had his dogs sit down. No sooner had he pulled the chains over their heads than they were off, tearing into the woods in dark snarling streaks.

The ex-boyfriend followed slowly after his dogs, dodging branches as he made his way through the patch of forest. He remarked as he walked that there was something different about the ground; it was nothing specific, just that the feel of it under his feet seemed foreign and unfamiliar.

As the trees began to thin out, the beach ahead came gradually into view. Above, the moon hung full and round as a tennis ball, glowing white. The dogs bolted around mindlessly in its light, across the silvery sand, snapping at one another and then rolling off into the shadows. The ex-boyfriend smiled.

And then he looked up, past the dogs, and for the first time noticed the ocean itself. The water seemed to spread infinitely, stretching to where it should have become a horizon, truncated by the night sky, but it went beyond, beyond that so that it seemed to merge with the sky, it dissolved into the sky and then continued still, it became the sky and took over the sky and filled in the sky and the ocean was the sky and it was all just so flat, everything was so flat and calm and it went on like that for ever and ever, and it went on like that forever.

**- Pasha Malla**

The tower was an opera glass: there were  
gilt wall hangings with black cows;  
and the little princess in a black dress,  
you couldn't tell whether her dress had  
green suns on it or if you were seeing  
her flesh through the holes in her rags.

- Max Jacob

## *When Starlight Slides Across*

your painful bruise  
twice as fast as gasps come.  
Means there's a wedding taking place in the dungeon  
with plenty of touching to supersede  
demands on your heart.  
Now consider what good just/any mouth would be  
if it's tasting communion juice right then.  
And shock to see the fire's flames  
dilating wider, joined by another fire  
both approaching to hug around you  
in a darkness of liquid bone.  
Start of a ritual where crickets can object.  
"Entering is not urgent" comes the call  
so you make your face extra scruffy  
below waving wisps of insane hair.  
Much as a thick-syrup sound starts muffling  
your vital glands.  
"The peaches are overripe now"  
a voicemail calls.  
Verifying you've reached the intersection  
of one wasteland with another.

**- *Jim Dewitt***

## *The Cult of Osiris*

His face shines like a silver spoon dripping  
honey when he tells her about the time

everything was real, even his wife's Jackie  
O dress, the silk of her stockings,

the shape of her toes when she undresses  
with one foot on the floor, the other

on his chest. She could be a mythical  
goddess folding dreams into an envelope

steamed open in the night. They will always  
be together. This he has sworn to the girl

he met on the Internet. He wants her to be real  
so he can touch this human headed bird

before she flies to the underworld  
or cries 'the West is the home of the dead'.

Is there any difference between cybersex  
and an affair? He'd say yes but the girl would say

it's a cult and mention Osiris was cut to shreds,  
how he keeps coming back again and again,

how there's a knot forming underneath a trinity  
of tongue, how suddenly she has to run.

**- Alison Daniel**

she was exotic company

her mouth  
full of mouse

Frank never heard a word  
his gaze  
steady on the mouse  
disappearing to reappear  
with every syllable

devoted  
he prayed  
to God she'd  
marry him

but late in the night  
she touched his hand

Frank recoiled  
and realized  
it was really  
the mouse  
in her mouth  
he loved

- *C.A. Conrad*

Frank yawns “you’d never  
know I lived for years  
in the upper  
left hand  
bureau drawer  
with a broken  
spring and  
corroded  
batteries  
in my neck  
if I hadn’t  
just  
said  
so”

- *C.A. Conrad*

## Electron Music

One s two  
Two s two  
Two p six  
Three s two  
Three p six  
Four s two  
Three d ten  
Whatever the literary  
Merit of Psalms  
There is poetry  
In orbital shells

**- Stephen D. Rogers**

[**Note:** Electron orbital shells are the regions within which electrons travel around the nucleus.

The first number represents the distance from the nucleus. The letter represents the shape of the region. The last number represents the most electrons that can fit in that shape.

If you could simply add electrons to elements to create new elements, the electrons would follow these patterns. Hydrogen has one electron in 1s. Helium adds a second electron which also fits in 1s making two and the region is filled. The third electron in Lithium thus moves further out to the 2s shell. Beryllium adds the second 2s electron, filling the region. Boron adds its additional electron in the 2p orbital which will hold six electrons. And so on.

The odd shape of the Periodic Table is based on orbital shells. The first two columns fill the s shells. The next ten columns fill the d shells. The last six columns fill the p shells, and the two rows on the bottom fill the f shells.]



## Fortune Cookies

The speed of light shall  
help you leave your past behind.

You will find success in  
everything you do when off-planet.

To sleep a hundred years  
is to awaken truly far from home.

A wise man knows which  
wormhole to take, and which to avoid.

Sometimes the best advice  
is that not taken from your resident AI.

It is said the man who follows  
his heart(s) lives a long and happy life.

There are questions you can't  
pose, answers you can't comprehend.

Great fortune will soon be  
yours -- see other side for coordinates.

- *G.O. Clark*

## The Doctor

*You ever notice how no one really tries to get to know each other?*

The first plaque read. *A man woke up blind one morning, and was never happier*, the second plaque read. Both of these wooden plaques hung side-by-side on the wall of the doctor's office, the letters in gold. One might be conceivably able to place the same value on these words as they do on the gold they were written in. The first one hung straight to the human eye; the second was slightly tilted. When Andrew Topel came into the office that morning, he glanced at both of the plaques and scratched his ear. Andrew straightened the second plaque, but it fell back out of place. He then walked to where three chairs were set out, presumably for customers/patients but quite possibly for ghosts with names like Jerome David Salinger. Andrew chose the middle chair and sat down.

The walls of the doctor's office were painted white, whiter than the page these words are written on, and were bare except for the two plaques. There was a door straight ahead from where Andrew sat, about ten feet away. This door opened, and a man who had no abnormal physical qualities worth speaking of pushed his head out and smiled. The light from the ceiling reflected off his dark glasses.

"Andrew Topel, Andrew Topel, I thought I recognized your smell. Please come back," the man said and motioned with a raise of his head.

Andrew Topel got out of the middle chair and took three long strides to the door, took a look over his shoulder, then followed the man walking up ahead. He didn't shut the door behind him.

"I know things," the man ahead of Andrew said. He then stepped into the wall and disappeared. A hand came back out of the wall and snapped its fingers three times. *snap snap snap*

Immediately following the third snap Andrew found himself in a green room with two others. There were no doors on the walls, and a lamp stood in the middle of the room. A sign attached to a gold chain dangling down past the lampshade read: *pull for more light*.

The first of the two others was the man wearing dark glasses who had spoken to Andrew earlier. The second was sitting on the reflective floor with his legs crossed and facing the wall. A bag of Lays potato chips was beside him, and he reached in and grabbed a handful. He crunched them in his hands. "The sound of a soul crying," he said.

The man with the dark glasses turned and looked at Andrew. "Please have a seat." He moved his arm across his body and a red sofa appeared by the lamp. The man crunching potato chips got up and wiped his hands on his white T-shirt. He extended one of those hands.

"I'm Edgar Allen Poe," he said. Andrew grabbed the extended hand and shook it. The skin was cold. "I'm not sure whether it's a pleasure to meet you or not. But please, as my friend here suggested, have a seat." He walked over to the lamp and tugged on the gold chain. The room became dimmer and dimmer with each pull. The room remained bright, though; light was coming from the two men in the room.

Andrew Topel walked over to the red sofa and sat down. Edgar Allen Poe went back to the corner he had been sitting in and pulled a typewriter out of the pocket of his brown corduroys. He ran a hand through his raven-black hair, then began to type, even though there was no paper in the typewriter.

The man wearing the dark glasses, who was presumably the doctor, smiled. He walked over to Andrew.

"I'm John Clark Pratt. Doctor Pratt, actually, but I hate that label attached to my name. You know?" He smiled at Andrew. Andrew couldn't see his eyes. The dark glasses reflected Andrew's own image and the red sofa he sat in. For all Andrew knew, the doctor's eyes could have been backwards, peering into his own head. "Why did you feel you had to come to me? Hmmm? What's wrong with you?"

Andrew began to speak, but his words were drowned out by the clanging away of the typewriter.

Doctor Pratt smiled. "I'm black, I'm red, I'm yellow, I'm green, if you don't hear what I say you can't understand what I mean." The doctor made a fist, opened it, and unfolded the piece of paper that appeared in his hand. He turned his back to Andrew, cleaned his glasses with a yellow handkerchief and put them back on, then turned back around to face Andrew.

The doctor looked down at the piece of paper. "It says here that you are supposed to show, not tell." He tapped Andrew on the head. "Remember?" The doctor threw the piece of paper into the air. It turned into a rainbow for a brief moment, then vanished.

"For example, I can't see your face. You haven't described it to me yet. You could have written a few details in the beginning, when you walked into my office, about your appearance."

The doctor waved his arm and it turned into a pencil. "Look here." He *began* to move the pencil through the air, and wrote in bold underlined Times new Roman letters: *After Andrew tried to straighten the second plaque, he noticed his reflection. He blinked his green eyes and scratched his rather large nose.* The doctor clapped his other hand and Andrew heard the sound of one hand clapping. The words in the air fell to the ground and the arm that was a pencil returned to its usual form. "There it is," Doctor Pratt said.

"Furthermore, what about the weather?" Doctor Pratt tapped his finger against his dark glasses. "I want to see what the weather is like outside." The doctor then stepped toward Andrew and brushed some snow off his shoulder.

The doctor shook his head back and forth. “And please don’t try and tell me you are working on a deadline. That man there,” he pointed to the corner where Edgar Allen Poe sat typing away, “he’s writing on a deadline.” Doctor Pratt nudged Andrew with his elbow and chuckled.

“Open wide, please. And say ahh.” Doctor Pratt now examined Andrew’s throat with a red marker. “Ah ha, yes,” he said, moving the marker around Andrew’s throat.

“It seems you have dream-disease, Andrew. You see reality float by and don’t grasp on to anything. You don’t know what you want to do, you are scared of failing. Your trouble is that you’re a dead stone. Plain and simple, simple and plain. A dead stone doesn’t move. A dead stone doesn’t feel. What can you do with a dead stone but throw it in the ocean? You misspelled exercise at the top of your first page and I marked it. A publisher would have immediately thrown your work out. They can’t stand those things. Indeed, it seems you don’t want to put your heart out on the chopping block. My advice? Try and free up your writing. Picture yourself moving down a purple river in a paddleboat, and try using a Klee-shay oar two. Add some eye-runny to your work, you know, create a real tearjerker while avoiding the use of cliché.

Doctor Pratt glanced down at the red marker in his hand. He shook the marker and it transformed. “Here, take one of these and don’t bother to call me in the morning.” He dropped the object into Andrew’s open hand. It was a small silver pin, resembling the wings a fighter pilot might receive. Andrew brought it up closer to his eyes and read the inscription: *Good try, keep going.*

Andrew pinned the silver wings directly above the scarlet A on the letterjacket he was wearing.

“One, two three, look at me, read this story and you might find the key,” Doctor Pratt said. He back-flipped and when he landed turned into a small white book that spun on a shiny, reflective green floor.

Andrew rose from the red sofa and picked up the book. Edgar Allen Poe stopped typing and turned his head. Andrew opened the cover of the book. He read the first sentence aloud. ‘*You ever notice how no one really tries to get to know each other?*’ the first plaque read.

**- Andrew Topel**

And Kublai said: "It is all useless, if the last landing place can only be the infernal city, and it is there that, in ever-narrowing circles, the current is drawing us."

And Polo said: "The inferno of the living is not something that will be; if there is one, it is what is already here, the inferno where we live every day, that we form by being together. There are two ways to escape suffering it. The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space."

- Italo Calvino,  
*from Invisible Cities*, translated by William Weaver