

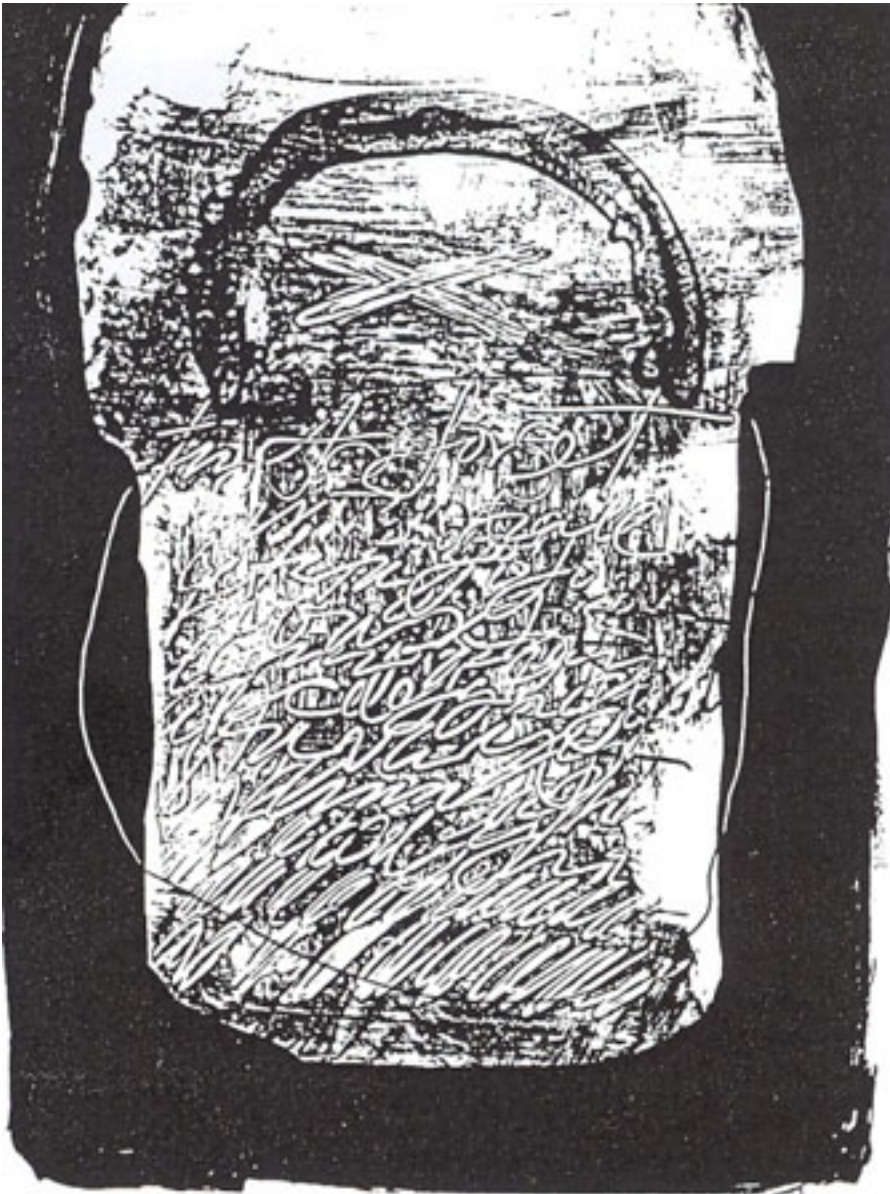
Imaginary Toads

*D Press ~1999~ Sebastopol
Cover art by Claude Smith*

for Belle Randall

*Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was and
methought I had—but man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what
methought I had.*

—Midsummer's Night Dream



HEAD WATER

Syntactic order brackets
word relationships,
but this should not prevent us
from holding hands

Asked what
prevented him when asked
what prevented
him from
internally reallocating
functor categories
f/internally
reallocating functor
categories from non-
exigent conditions
from non-exigent
conditions, he replied

O, potato chip
prime mover of palatability
bugaboo to step on in the dark
cosmic potato of parabolic curves
let me lick your salty thighs

S/Seys
E/Cexy
X/Son of Lucifer
bringer of fire

Whether it is a potato or not
I do not know or not know
care or not care
for, for sure, it will resemble
Arp's navel

When asked what

prevented the potato chip
f/attaining inter-subjective
metamorphosis when injest-
ed

Edgar Allen
Poe tato
replied

Birds of calm
rest on the charmed wave

IDEOGRAM

for Carolyn Kiser

A stick figure, I open my mouth—
two swallows spin out.

THE COLOR WHITE

for Bob Kaufman

Salt, snow, endless abomunisms—
my sheets *before* Lorca.

Pounds of eloquence and giant imagists, poetry can be very boring.
Denise Levertov & Robert Bly argue in the Captain's tower.

GIVE ME FAG VOMIT

Fucks US
under the stars

and stripes
where the Axis
(no, they don't ask us)

and the Allies
(of course, it's all lies)
create a suction,
an enigma
in the ice box.

You can see
in the dawn's early light
his dong is long
past the pull date.

LBJ keeps poking the obvious member of the sleeping dragon of
the Orient because, for the life of US, he doesn't know who he
wants to invite to his barbecue. Old presidents don't die; they just
bloat up.

HE WHO LISTS TO HUNT

Flower
Unicorn
Canker
Ketchikan

what can I say?
I saw them climb
Deer Mountain.

I called my friend, and
he gave no answer.
I entreated him with

my mouth

God
suck
flower

Once Caesar crossed the Rubicon, he never looked back. Part of the legend is we kidnapped Robert Duncan. We made it as far as Vancouver on his Master Card. The army still lives off the ransom.

GENERAL MacTHUSELAH

Genesis V 27, his days
were nine hundred sixty and nine years.

Forlorn is foul
weather—none

better or

brighter than his
shield.

He returns and returns
and returns again.

Lambmines in the sand
are not compassionate.

Lu, I would remake the whole universe for you if I could, but the ghosts are hostile. I'm afraid they've dug in and have lots of ammo.

It's all the same war. The generals just fade in and out. Beware of the sharp explosions.

ERRATA

read lankmines for lambmines
read lampmines for lankmines
read limpmines for lampmines
read linkmines for limpmines
read lessmines for linkmines
read lostmines for lessmines

In the early morning wind—
Diamonds and Wild Cherries

Re form—the same extension which constitutes a body constitutes
space. Re content—a life lived with respect to mistakers, a jest of
meaning. A joust

TRAINS THAT COULD

I sing
To cloud to tree to wind to T.V.

I sing
Watusi wa
Watusi wa tu

I see two
Watusis in tutus.

Stopping the troop trains, it was a bad day in Berkeley. Some of it
was subtle. Some of it was gross. All of it was ugly.

APOCYYYLOVE

Archaic
Provincial
Old
Concise

Yes, and
 even though everyone else is wearing
 their cap backwards in Military Sci

I focus and try to keep my sights steady
FOR LOVE

This will be the only appearance of Oliver North in the poem. His
escape is forwards.

WAR SAW

This is how it is, Sir—
Sack and burn,
Rape and pillage,
Every town and every village.

Clausewitz was right—war should not be left to the Generals.

O, THE HELLS RING OUT

Noriega's sentence reduced 10 years
British jets hit Iraq
Ugandan troops kill 15 Hutu rebels
Record Warmth triggers coral die-off
Three Serbs slain by Kosovo rebels

74 million saw Lewinsky on TV

*I was sitting on the beach.
The sun was just setting,
and up walks this gal who says,
"You have a beautiful shape."*

Goodbye ceps. This is a story Lu told me. He said he asked her name, and she said it was "Showers," and he thought it best to pass.

The count, and how to count the count—who do these numbers refer to?

WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

The Fookers were revved all night,
grounded
with their canisters of mustard gas.

**EXHEXDEXODREAM
SCREAMCREAM**

Poor Apollinaire.

Pour Apollonair was a face cream frantically sought in boutiques in Paris under the Vichy government in that war. These Fookers are Messerschmitts.

GERANIUMS
for J.W.

to the wall up my face down the river
running rapids without a paddle

hallway filled with fading portraits
in the shadows of the corners
I begin to see things begin to move

damn piss scream belch barf
down the road I walk with a sign
NO U TURN with a bottle of scotch
and my brains in my hands

you cut yourself and saw worlds within
worlds within worlds

Burma Shave.

A lifetime under house arrest. Outside I hear the keys of my
executioners jingle. If you wear a blindfold, does the firing squad
exist?

HERMES ON HIS ROUNDS

for D.C.

rain hail snow wind
blow down books blood
banks banker's daughters

sweet stain coming soon
sooner than the rain
hail snow wind

help hang hold

words zing in my head
flowers tremble at my feet
can't keep my seat—indebt
spent—can't repent—
pay the rent the car to split
my head

fish man star

this is an old tale story rhyme
line dance tune
in—here in
the mind in tune to this

NUMBED BY THE RAYS

of things which are dimensions
which are worlds

Ech!
—not rational, eats worms, tastes musty—
LIFE, LOVE— my honeyed breast
my hairy ass.

Ghosts in my closet.

My mind is haunted.

"Seven for the seven bright shiners, six for the six
proud walkers, five for the Pentecostal, four for
the gospel makers..."

"Stop it, or I'm going to kick you in the teeth,"
shouts a spook from the closet.

"...one is one and all alone."

Back in the hole I eat canned peas, instant mashed potatoes, and
mystery meat. Illuminated by a low watt bulb in a cage, that's me,
naked on a rough mattress.

TERROR ANGEL

for Claude

I press you to my heart,
Lambmine.

We sit in the light of God's golem eye
sampling images by Miro, Tapies, Picasso,
and Mary Smith.

She has such impact—her *vibe*, her *energy*!
Liable to go off at the slightest provocation.

Buster Keaton created mistakes. His mistakes worshipped him as
their greatest leader. 1927—hard to believe things could get so out
of control that quickly. *The General* is a mess.

MADDENING

Those lines
those lines
those damn lines

and all this blank space—
a place with no one in it

and nothing below the surface
and
 nothing above the surface
 and nothing on the surface
but a white rabbit.

One way to liberate the lovers from syntactic-semantic relationships
is to encourage them not to sleep between the lines.

NOT ANYTHING REAL

I dreamt you entered my tent
high on a ridge above a clear-cut.
I thought you'd come, and I came—
but you were only the moon—and I came.

I told this to my Theosophy Club,
but they didn't think it was mystical
and were a little shocked. All it was is
a poem.

I am filled as I am emptied.

The Grail is not the cup Christ drank from, but the serving plate
from the Last Supper. It is shaped like an eye, a fish, a vulva, and is
the geometrical form of *Pi*, the relationship of a radius to the
circumference of a circle, which can be revealed by two
overlapping circles whose perimeters intersect one another's centers.

HOLOGRAPHIC PARADIGM

I see a birdman very rigid, very freaked.
I see a bison also stiff,
the left foot turned so the cleft is seen—eyes, nose, thighs, toes
speak to me.

There is a break in the shaft.
There are breaks in the staff and dart.
Flickering torchlight and psilocybe—
best I omit the Cro-Magnon ceremonies.

Whether it is argued the proportional harmonies revealed in the Well Scene were arrived at intuitively or intentionally, the diagrams dispel the notion of a haphazard or awkward placement of the figures in the composition. With God's cosmic dick out in the conversation, His will and testicle on the tongue is revealed in golden section two of the forth part of the first part.

WORN TO A PHRASL

Blake had tea with me in the garden
behind Willow Wood Cafe, and I asked, "What is there where
imagelessness prevails?"

He told me, "Whereas some cosmoses are being transformed and
some cosMoses transfigured, whereas Peter Max paints on public
transit, some metamorphosis continues."

"How is this possible," said I, "where
there is no imagination?"

"Well," he replied, "On the Day of Creation—
upDOWNupDOWNupDOWNup."

The sun was high in the heavens at mid-second light while we
talked and drank our Wuli Oolong. The day was a cup of poetry.

PERSEPHONE'S MIRROR

for Beryl

I am that woman despised
by all other women

and most desired by men.

I am tormented

by the hostile sex

that saturates me.

There are days and days

when I feel ugly,

and no one likes me.

You say that within

a golden goddess sleeps,

although I am forbidden to see

anything but under ground.

Unfolding with Spring,

I yearn for whoever

can understand my pain.

SECRETS OF THE OVAL ORIFACE

Yes, oh, yes, yes, yes, yes,

this must stop—my soul is dark,

and it's flowers are nightshade and wolfbane.

We must put this behind us and get back to work.

Damn the sun and its flowers.

Damn the glass eye of the moon.

Damn my weakness and this heavy hour.

My heart quakes. Thank God, it's Friday.

This is a transcription of a tape recorded by Linda Tripp. Nothing was ever made of it because the events in Dallas superseded this situation in importance. Camelot is now a wispy memory.

BILLY MEETS THE CANYON SPIRIT

Dawn of the manicured fingertips.
Billy swallows a handful of peyote
and pulls himself out of bed
and away from the warm señorita.

He walks up an arroyo and into a canyon
a mile from his hut. The spirit of a bullet
ricocheting. There is the hiss of cymbals.
Billy's hand trembles in the fake landscape.

He blazes away with his *Peacemaker*.
He fires six rounds. Reloads. Fires.
He shoots bushes, rocks, holes in the ground.
He shoots bullets at bullets in the hot air.

Billy the Kid shooting in the chaparral,
he outdraws his shadow.

BOOGIE KNIGHT

Billy's in the closet checking out his arsenal,
trying on different outfits—

A Colt Anaconda and Colt Python
to crossdraw under a frock coat

A Browning Buck Mark with scope
and a Walther for backup with backstrap

A Smith & Wesson Model 640
with a Kahr micro 9 in patent leather

The Para-Ord double-action 14 shot .45
The Bland .577—the ultimate manstopper,

Your fresh face.

Marc, I dug your article on Rebel Angels, reminding me of Blake's *Your Heaven gate might be my Hell door*. Hard to know which way the angels blow in these poetry wars. So many confused flags.

FLASHBURN

The first trickster said, nothing lasts.
Or was it—you can't cross
the same beach twice—or once,
for that matter.

This morning I couldn't open my eyes.
Poured in a dose of sulfate and alcohol,
and they opened like the doors to a tomb.
When I closed the lids, a grating sound.

Here half my days gone and my light nearly spent.

Blindness, a deductible expenditure.
Some consolation that.

PHANTOMS OF THE FAYUM

I see a man with two birds in one hand and
a snake in the other, walking upon a
bridge above fishes
I see a woman in the background
I see flowers like bird tails
There's a butterfly landing on the man's foot
The butterfly is larger than the man's foot

The man is broken like the land
The woman looks the same as the man

Who was The? His wife? She wears a diaphanous gown, carries an Ankh, and has a dildo on her head. The naked, kneeling figure between his legs must be a servant. He beats the bush with a stick that resembles a snake. It is a boat made of rushes and not a bridge. A cat in the papyrus is trying to swallow a duck.

HEAR THEM BUZZZ

With the gums gone the
words within words, no kidding,
the birds chatting with other birds,
are barely heard.

And though the nose is
green and blue,
it's much too hot to twitch.

Nothing

Stirs except a blue-bottle fly.
The eye IN my head
sees me coming toward the river,
and a sound says,

"I will die outside your window."

Two rivers—the River Styx and the other one, I can't remember, the Russian, maybe. You get embalmed, and there's no place to go to piss to scream. If you follow me into the Underworld, be sure to bring two coins and two sandwiches.

THE WART CANNOT BE COERCED

OE dott, head of a boil
a small lump, clot 1570
a minute speck, spot, mark 1674
roundish mark made with a pen 1748

It was not the act
by which a dot is made until 1858.

Poets knew it
(knew (i)t) little
i, knewt, no
(tat, tit for tat)ed
knit (knew) it
dotted it down.

Who was busy being born and who busy dying? What were people reading? What wars were being fought? At this time a *dot* was a woman's marriage portion, of which the annual income was under her husband's control. James Buchanan was president.

MAYBE A MAIDEN

Hard to know.
She lives alone in a castle on a hill
with a garden of shrubs shaped like dogs.
Poodles, beagles, dobbermen.

In the second light, she sits by the window
feeding birds. Surely, they are nightingales.
No one is ever seen in the garden,
yet the shrubs stay shapely and tasteful.

Strange, her mode of life,
desiring nothing, to be left to herself

in a topiary garden, desiring nothing. Quite weird, really.

These peculiar settings and puzzling people, it's enough to make me cry, "That's it—let there be fire in the sea, earthquakes, hailstorms, avalanche. Let the sky open and the gods ejaculate."

FOREST PERILOUS

O, wild bubbling brook
in this forest among the ferns,
naked to the sky and the flowers
and the animals that drink you,

Your sweet liquid, so pure,
rising to my lips is purer by far
than time or the rambling
of this wooden-worded line.

A knight in rented armor (in dented amor) having shed tears and blood and spilt his seed in foreign hands pauses for refreshment before continuing his quest.

PERCY

O, Joker. Humorous in all situations.
The center of the pack—the hero
of transformation, an innocent fool.

He has frightening brightness in the eyes.
He laughs his bright laughter, and like
Stan Laurel does something unexpected.

Entranced by a few drops of blood
on the breast of a seagull in a parking lot
he shoots a half-court basket without looking.

Half a mind. Half a question. Half a deal.

Dotters, granddotters, and great granddotters of President Polk—a
dot in her story, pinning the head on the dotting Old Fool.

RISKING THE BOUNDARIES

for Chanon

There's somewhere I want to go,
and so I cruise the limits of the visible.
I feel the barrier, weird yet familiar
to my touch—is this a warning?

A car burns beside the road
where I meet the guardians of the way,
an old woman throwing bones in the dust,
a young man rolling stones on a board.

"Who are you?" he asks, "Elven queen,
white witch, she who has trouble
making up her mind?" If I pass, I know
I cannot return, but what more can I loose?

The wind carries me—I change.
I have no eyes. I have no sex.
I dance to the rhythm of the stars,
a dance that is older than love.

TESTAMENT OF A GHOSTMAN

for Max

Outside the Steppenwolf,
I finish off the wine.
An alley. On the wall
are words by madmen.

Pandhandle a turkey san
from the grotto,
hike up University
and crash in the bushes.

I awake with fingers
 in my pockets, roll
into Strawberry Creek—
up the bank and to the tracks.

As light illumines the bay,
"Hey, man, let's smear that queer."

Feet, do your thing.

TORTURELAND

Actually, it's California.
"When you get there," Theo says,
"they cut off your head."

Big Jim, Tonto, and the Maskedman
stripped to their pivot joints
and wrapped in white paper and scotch tape.

These are torture hats, and they're suffering
burning brands to subdue their wills.
Theo is getting at the truth.

"All right," I say, "pick up this stuff."
Theo, "But I want to save this torture stuff."

"Here, put it in this torture baggie."

Something Elizabeth noticed about boys playing with dolls—it's a short time and there are arms and legs missing. Of course, this gives a touch of realism to the battle scenes. I find a place in my funk assemblage for these parts. Theo assisting, we create a kind of art havoc. Torn tissue and shellac.

MERLIN CREEPING ABOUT

Usually they meet in the woods
for dark, secret conduct
in the frenzy of the moment.

I see them often, and I remain
hidden—not that I need the titillation,
but it's OK under the circumstances.

So much power in a secret—
yes, I too come to the woods
for dark, secret conduct.

I was locked up in Alameda County Jail. The ghosts thought I had come to liberate them. They wanted better shit to eat, and they believed my *lambmine* was the Holy Grail.

WEARY ELVES

Lovers abide their time
in uninterrupted bliss.

Gentle forms

hovering above the steep hills
grieving, grieving.

Nature molds a new day
from filmy vapors and dissolves
the confusion of joy and pain.

Stars
 reflect
 in the lake
order
peace

Hot damn!

I KNOW A PLACE

for Robert C.

I attended him as he spoke,
his logic like a rapier, bent
in with a twist, then out,
phenomena trailing from my wound.

Jack, he said,
which is not my name,
the next tournament
won't be held in Berkeley.
Berkeley is too bizarre.

Better Oakland, it was
noted for savage eucalyptus
and wild animal life
long before there was road rage, let's
drive to Mel's for cokes and fries.

STARS AND TIME

all
and
all
and
all

this line
this rhyme
this line

dances
on the stones
in the trees
to the stars

Nothing analytical here. I spent the day painting a nude; she complained of cramps, but I explained she had to hold the pose. Models don't know what they are.

GENERAL MacTHUSELAH

Genesis V 27, his days
were nine hundred sixty and nine years.

Forlorn is foul
weather—none

better or

brighter than his
shield.

He returns and returns
and returns again.

Landmines in the sand
are not compassionate.

Lu, I would remake the whole universe for you if I could, but the
ghosts are hostile. I'm afraid they're dug in and have lots of ammo.
It's all the same war. The generals just fade in and out. Beware of
the sharp explosions.

NECTAR

drop drop
rain on window
right on time

drop drop
morning glow
sun's confession

drop drop
behind bars
reading the Gideon Bible

drop drop
news that stays news
completely confused

drop drop
and now Paul Harvey
with the rest of the story

LATE KNIGHT ON THE GOLDEN GATE

in memory of Frank Kennedy

You were AWOL.
We'd been out all night
driving about, drinking stout.

You wanted to cruise the bridge,
and we said we'd pick you up
on the Marin side, Jerry and Jim and I.

They must have thought you suspicious,
two Highway Patrolmen—you freaked
and leaped into the fog.

The hill seemed closer than it was—
200 feet down, you were agog
when you landed in the muck on your ass.

Man, you were a true stand-up.
Before you ceased to breathe, you said
"It only hurts when I fart."

NO VISIBLE MEANS OF SUPPORT

from Ketchikan I wrote
Life is a backdrop
the first house governs the body
the next, phenomena
then communication
Death, Sex—to die is to come

Orgasm
has been defined
as a long, highly complex molecule

from Ketchikan I wrote
Love is a prop

The poet objectively considers his materials, his words as energy-vortex (nouns = verbs), and so the book becomes concrete. This principle operates in the Hammurabian Code and the calligraphy of Medieval manuscripts.

LEARNING NEW WORDS

"Hey, Dad, what does this say?"
I look at the magnetic letters on the fridge.

"*AZOLE MOUSE*."
"Naw, it says *FUCKMOUSE*, doesn't it?"

"That begins with an *F*."
"What does a *F* look like?"

"An *E* without the bottom leg."
"There is no *F*."

"Let it stand as is. Now, off to bed."
"How about a short poem, tonight, Dad?"

Yes, how about it.