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THANKSGIVING DAY PRAYER, 1990

Thank you, God, for this day and for the food
of which we are about to partake.

Thank you for our loved ones — children and
grandchildren, husbands and wives, parents
and grandparents, brothers and sisters,
aunts and uncles, even ex-husbands and wives,
and for their health, which is as good as
can be expected, taking into account age
and genetic background.

Thank you for our ability to earn enough money
sufficient to feed and clothe and shelter
ourselves, with a little something left over
for Pizza Man deliveries and cable t.v. sub-
scription movies and enough Barbie dolls and
clothes and cars and furniture and accessories
to make 100 little Guatemalan girls happy
for a lifetime.

Thank you for my sons, born too late for Viet Nam
and too early for Desert Shield.

Thank you for my daughters, born too late to be
trapped by "the only occupation a woman was
truly created to fulfill" and too early to have
thoughts of financing their education by
joining the Reserves.

Thank you for our being born in the United States of
America, which, with all its faults, is still
the best country to live in (5,000 immigrants
a day attest to that).

Thank you for our being born in the latter part of the 20th Century, when infant mortality is low, when polio, smallpox, T.B., diphtheria, scarlet fever, whooping cough, and rickets are rare; when every day there is a new and more successful treatment for cancer and MS and MD and SIDS and even AIDS.

Thank you for this table before us, groaning under the weight of platters piled high with food — food which we will eat until we are bloated and miserable, lying about the living room belching and farting and complaining that we haven't an iota of space left over for dessert, and the kitchen is filled with enough left-overs to feed half of Ethiopia.

Thank you, especially, God, for our being born middle-class, Protestant, and white, so that we may never suffer the afore-mentioned diseases and deprivations, the pain of prejudice and persecution, and the agony of concentration camps, pogroms, mass graves, and genocide.

THE CRIMINAL MENTALITY

It was still daylight
when I hurried into the downtown mall
on my way home from work.
Montgomery Ward was having a sale
and I wanted a specific item —
a cotton nightshirt with Garfield
in high-top sneakers on the front,
a snide remark about jogging
issuing from his mouth
in a cloud-shaped balloon.
My daughter who deeply resents
having to walk half a block
to her parked car
would love it.

The cashier in Lingerie was young
and flustered, having trouble with an exchange
while three more customers
waited impatiently.
I took the nightshirt next door
to Mens' Wear
where the smiling cashier was free
and no customers were waiting.
When I took out my Visa Card,
he said in awkward English, patting the register,
"This machine she don't do credit cards."
As I was questioning the validity

of this remarkable statement
a sour-faced floor manager appeared
and explained that the cashier "didn't
do credit cards."

I asked him if he could ring up my purchase,
and, his station in life having been
grossly insulted, he curtly directed me
to Ladies' Dresses.

The cashier in Ladies' Dresses
was plump and motherly — almost in tears
as she explained that her register
had jammed and she was waiting for Maintenance
("and you know how long they can take, dear!").
She suggested I try Linens, across the aisle.

I noticed through the glass mall doors
that it was growing dark —
my ride had reluctantly dropped me off
only after I assured her
I would be in and out in a flash
and on my way home via public bus
before the sun had set
over one of the worst parts of town.

In Linens there was no cashier at all.
I rushed a passing clerk,
waving the nightshirt like a flag of truce.
But she only worked in Cosmetics
and was not authorized
to handle the Linens register.
She promised to locate the correct clerk
who was probably on her dinner break.
I waited 20 minutes.
Nobody came.

I returned to Lingerie,
hoping the line had thinned.
Instead, at least half a dozen irate customers
were waiting — each with an exchange
or a return.
I laid out the exact change, including tax,
on the counter, and explained to the cashier
that I desperately needed to catch a bus,
that no other departments could help me,
and that I didn't need a bag or a receipt.
Without looking up, she snapped,
"Why don't you go to the end of the line
and wait your turn like everybody else!?"
"Everybody else" looked at me
as if I were street scum
or mentally retarded
or carried an Oozie in my shopping bag.

I felt something — like a tightly-wound rubber band — snap inside my head.

I held the nightshirt aloft on its plastic hanger, and yelled, "I would like to buy this item — does anyone here want to take my money?" The Lingerie clerk ignored me. Customers stared.

I headed for the entrance to the store, holding up the nightshirt and announcing to the air that I would be perfectly happy to pay for it if someone would let me. The girls in Cosmetics were busy trying on new nail enamels. No one made a move to stop me.

I walked through the entire mall, nightshirt flung over my shoulder, price tags and plastic hanger flapping, passing shoppers, store clerks, armed mall guards.

When I reached the main doors, I turned to give them one last chance — shouting as loud as I could, "I am taking this nightshirt with me and I am not paying for it!" Nothing happened.

I stepped out into the moonless night and hurried to the nearest bus alcove. I laid the nightshirt across my lap so, like a weapon, it could not be labelled "concealed."

I was not afraid — of the groups of slouching low-riders hanging around the alcove, ghetto-blasters the size of microwaves at maximum volume, of the reeking old drunk out cold on the opposite bench, the crotch of his filthy pants dark with urine, of the leather-skinned, disoriented bag ladies, fat in their layers of trash-bin clothes, mumbling and swearing to themselves as they roamed the streets carrying everything they owned in shopping bags not unlike mine.

I felt a kinship with them all — I, too, was now a lawbreaker, an outcast, an untouchable.

I realized then how thin the line

between us is —
all it takes to break it
is the right set of
circumstances.

— Catherine Lynn

Long Beach CA

THE MAN IN THE MOON

My pregnant woman's body
has marks and spots, red scars
and black dots, moles and
rainbow bands that stretch
far, as fast as life.
Pocks and pits.
Crevices and craters.

She is my moon,
bombarded by microscopic bits
of elemental matter,
big as a milk-filled, cereal bowl
set on a limitless, royal blue, silver service table.

I READ POETRY LIKE

it has one more syllable
than I can pronounce.

FOOD

The two Asian workers in the kitchen always
offer to share their food with me.
The other Caucasian waiter shares his food
as well. If it's a slow night the Chilean
chef cooks me something.

Try to borrow or lend five bucks
we all give dumb, blank stares.
Who knows where the money is going
or where it's coming from.

But this food thing is sacred.
No questions asked.
The time has come to realize this.

CAUGHT IN ICE

A light, clear-blue, plastic ice cube tray
sits in small puddles
on the counter
by the aluminum kitchen sink.

Light, yellow and dusty hot,
streams through the window
cutting itself
on a suspended prism.

The room is empty.

In the living room with dark wood
a naked three-year-old
with pink bows in blonde hair
plays the piano
thinking of last night's bad dreams.

In another room
someone rustles.

STRAIGHTEDGE RAZOR

Old, but as clear of eye
as a sixteen-inch rainbow trout
freshly pulled from the blue lake,
she looks at me
seeing a son with an ex-wife and children.
She has come across the praries
and mountains with packages and
bags, suitcases and valises,
stopping at the ocean to hold
the final grandchild,
a mancub named Max.
After a stay she packs again
turning the car into the rising
sun of the east.

What she expects or needs
from me has been lost
in the bowling alley of time.
A kiss and she pats my cheek
saying, "Take care of my grandchild,
that woman, and, for God's sake!,
shave."

PRODUCE

My pregnant wife is as unusual
as South Pacific fruit.

Exotically shaped and textured
as if an apple was crossed with
a maraca with
a cantaloupe with
a salmon-colored, crystal ball.

And then touched
by the bristling genius
of the wolf, Gauguin.

HOUSESITTING

This is not our house
although we have lived here.

These are not our plates
although we have eaten here.

These are not our cups
although we have drunk here.

And these are not our dogs
although they lie at our feet
with ash upon their heads.

— Jeff Parsons

Surrey B.C., Canada

SPARE PARTS

On Sunday they meet at the swap meet.
He cruises the used auto parts
for a piston and a tie-rod for
a 1947 to 51 Packard.
It looks like a bug, his friends
tell him, like a big cockroach,
but he thinks — not a bug, an insect,
a scarab, a sacred beetle,
the sign of the Pharaohs, the kings of the dead —
like the hood ornament he buys
for a 52 to 55 Pontiac,
the head of an Indian in dark orange plastic

the color and feel of amber.
He wants it for his living room
he's not sure where.
He'll build a wood stand for it
in his shop in the garage
and put it on top of the stereo or the teevee
or some other place of honor.

BREAKFAST

There aren't any carhops at the drive-in,
but that's okay,
he isn't driving a car.
He buys a cup of coffee
and sits at the picnic table in front
and watches the kids on the jungle gym.
They're from Ohio, they tell him, southern Ohio,
on vacation with mom and dad.
That's their car, the Buick station wagon.
He notices the tailpipe is about to fall off.
The bracket's rusted through.
They put too much salt on the road in winter
in southern Ohio.
A farmer on an early run with a load of vegetables
sits down at the table across from him.
"Say, don't I know you," he says.
"Aren't you the guy who used to work on my ...
what was it? I thought you were"
"No," he says, "Don't think so.
But it could've been my brother, Lazarus."

SOAPS

In the afternoon he watches soaps.
Except for Richie and Biff and Delia
he doesn't know their names.
They all blend into one another,
all the handsome, lazy, idealistic
young men, his son
when he was ten, building the soapbox.
He didn't want any help.
The old man couldn't even go in his own garage.
It was secret, the ultimate soapbox,
beautiful as a starry night after a stormy day.
But it didn't roll,
he could've told him it wouldn't roll.
He could've fixed it in a minute or two.
Strange — he's proud of his son.

Now. Not then.
Then he was embarrassed.
Then he was the laughing stock,
the mechanic's son who couldn't set a wheel!

— Lee Rossi

Santa Monica CA

ODIE'S STORY

Uncle Jim thinks he's a connoisseur of cigars, so my sister, who works in the R.G. Dunn factory, gets these cases for dollar cigars and puts 25 cent cigars in them and I take them to work and give them to the dude and he's smelling them and going around saying Now you want to smell a good cigar, smell this. And everybody else knows except him that they're only cheap cigars. You know, he seemed so fucking happy I finally couldn't tell him. As much as I don't like the guy, he seemed really grateful. It made his day. I thought I'd feel good putting one over on him, but I just felt bad. I mean I've never seen anybody get so excited over cigars.

A MATTER OF PRIDE

Whenever I see a truck jacked up high so you can see the rear axel, I look at it and wonder if it's one of the ones I helped make. And when I pass the sign on the freeway listing the current number of new cars built in America, I think about how I helped make some of those cars.

But we don't have any control over how fast the number turns. Anyone can come in and press my two buttons. But I spend half my time trying to get away with not working. It seems like that's the only way to make a dent — to goof things up.

But if I goof things up and everyone else goofs things up then we'll all lose our jobs. But I'm paid well to push my two buttons.

But I don't have any say, finally. And finally there's some rich guys getting richer because somewhere down the line they got their money first. And finally maybe they're paying us just enough to keep us comfortable, just enough so we can go in debt for our houses and cars. Just enough to keep us numb and distracted and tired. Just enough. I watch the number slowly turn.

MIDNIGHT RAMBLE

This is the middle class, lower. The tree on the lawn. Bushes in front of the house. Flowers in the yard. Lawn mowers growling. Dogs barking. Lots of dogs. Everyone has one, for safety, and they keep them locked up in their yards where they bark and bark behind their fences because no one ever takes them for a walk. Ice cream men. Lawn chairs. And beer and beer bellies and white paint on trim and brick and a hose at the side of the house. Squares, everything squares. Sidewalks and lawns and porches and houses and brains. TV sets. Garage sales and telephone poles. Kids sell koolaid in summer, shovel snow in winter. Till they're old enough to smoke and drink and raise hell. They get a couple years of that, then it's factory time. Always one lawn mower going. Because everyone on this street works in a factory and they're all on different shifts. Maybe they communicate through their lawns. Waking me here in the basement where I sleep. Eternal lawn mower of summer. I sleep in my parents' basement, a cave, dark, damp. Everyone around my age in the factory says they're not going to work there the rest of their lives. Just 'temporary.' The old guys laugh at that. They say Temporary my ass.

EXPLORING

After parking my car in the East Lot, I head past the guard post, past the security cameras, past the sign listing the number of days since the last work-loss accident, stuck at 29 for weeks. Then into the locker room, with its large round sinks, and the hand cleaner that looks and feels like sawdust, and the old battered lockers, and the first whiff of the dark smell of grease.

When I first started, I got lost a few times just trying to find my way out at the end of my shift. Once I ended up at the wrong doors, the ones that attach the plant to the offices, the doors that go from noise and grit and darkness to clean, bright, quiet rooms where people dress nice and talk to each other in normal voices. Heads turned. I turned, back into the black noise.

The plant has its own hospital, its own store, its own railroad, its own streets, a main cafeteria and five satellites. It's so huge, so hard to find a way out.

— Jim Daniels

Pittsburgh PA

THE ROADSWEEPER OF ROCHESTER HIGH STREET

what makes us tick?
we look into mirrors and stare into our teeth ...
try looking out onto the street for a change,
thats where everything happens ...
see that roadsweeper with the neck like a hook?
he looks out and he sees, he sees what? ... and
its a mirracal that he can walk, bent over double,
cut in half, like a bracket, holding onto the back
of his machine ... he shuffels, he makes a grab ...
a just society? — go and ask him, chew the fat a
little ... he hasnt got too much to say for himself?
— but then these are only words, the worlds full
of them, bookshelves of hearsay and bullshit ...
weer all obsessed with words and self love, me
and that girl over there, you with yours ... waighting
... talking ...
the roadsweeper of rochester high street? the one
with the damaged face? — full of self love? who
cares? he dosnt really exist dose he, because in
this world, in this society, in this century, more
than ever before, as much as ever before, we are
what we own

WOMEN

as i walk past
the military cemetery
on city way rochester
the dead turn in their
stifling tombs of earth
and let out foul air
with hollow sighs

it is a sunny day near
the end of august and
the young girls are
wearing their summer
dresses
'HOOK NOSE!'
they shout at me
immediately blushing
and pushing out their
budding padded tits

thus is women

THE TRAP

i require a holdall
i have voted
i put my cap on
and we are free to vote
and i said i would never
vote again
this is one of the ways in
which we are caught ...
and now they tell me they
would like me to teach
printing
the local adult education
centre
50 pounds for 4 hours
work
double my weeks dole
cheque ...
this is one of the ways in
which we are caught ...
vote? — for what?
we are all part of the
shoal, the nets cast all
about us ...
we move on mass, in flurrys,
in stops and starts ... fish,
yes fish, but not fish ...
men, mean frightend men ...
will i take the job? — i
hope not, for pittys sake
i hope not ...

DAY UP LONDON

the black girl in the bright
yellow rayon trouser suit who
lent over the edge of the platform
at victoria station and let go
a brown jet of liquid from
between her gapped wite teeth
adjusted her dark glasses and
followed her wite pin-striped
husband onto the train carrage
who inquired angrily — where
the hell were you?

— Billy Childish

Rochester Kent, England

THE MOST HATED MAN IN MEXICO

Tuesday, on the beach in Mazatlan,
vendor after vendor comes by,
trying to sell me his wares.
And though I don't want to buy anything,
it's a good excuse to give my Spanish a workout.
"No necesito esto toalla hoy pero volve manana por la
manana por favor."

I say the same thing to every one of them, changing only
the name of the article I am supposedly considering the
purchase of.

Wednesday, still buying nothing and surrounded by
short vendors with long memories,
I am the most hated man in Mexico.

"HEY MISTER, YOU WANT TO LOOK AT MY JUNK JUST FOR THE
HELL OF IT?"

The vendors who work the strip of sand outside the Hotel
El Cid in Mazatlan all seem to use the same sales pitch.

"Practically free."

"Good deal."

"Best deal."

"Good quality."

"Best quality."

"For you, a good deal."

It's so uniform, I figure someone is offering these guys
a sales class in the lobby of one of the hotels.

But I look at the stuff just the same.

And some of it is nice,
and some of it is so-so,
and some of it is positively godawful.

But regardless the pitch is the same.

"Good quality, best prices, practically free."

Finally, a very worn-looking guy in some very worn-looking
olive flares accosts me,

"Hey mister, you want to look at my junk just for the hell
of it?"

How can I resist?

I figure I've found the guy Diogenes was looking for
without so much as a flashlight.

So I give his stuff a look and the junk isn't half-bad.

And I'd like to be able to say here that I purchased
something from the guy just to reward his veracity,
but sorrily I didn't.

I looked his junk over very carefully,
but in the end all I ended up getting from the guy was the
body to the cover letter for all my subsequent submissions.

— Eric Grow

Brea CA

RED

Paint my car red
Red
Like old movie star lips
Red
Like a police siren
Paint my car red
Red
Like the blood
On a terrorist's knife
Red
Paint my car
Red
Like a baboon's ass
Red
Like Joan Collins' nails
Red
Paint my car red

cavemen
thinking
without words

BINGO

starlet reflected
in the limo driver's
mirrored sunglasses

She is young and pretty,
serving up cokes and burgers
at Perkin's Cake & Steak.
"Totalled my car on Thursday,"
she says to a burly fellow
wearing a Harley t-shirt.
"Then my old man gets fired
'cause he can't get to work —
but on Friday night
I played black-out bingo
and I won a new car,"
she says pointing to a shiny
new Pontiac Beretta parked
outside in the rain.
"Sometimes things just
seem to work out."
And she spins away
to pick up my order
of steak fries and eggs.

YELLOW

A yellow wooden table
is resting
in a wheat field
Back in the city
they are forming
a committee
to study
this

— Donald McLeod

Sherman Oaks CA

**Some Gagaku And
One Not Gagaku**



Steve Richmond

NOT GAGAKU

only a few esoteric comrades
of mine will
understand th'title

it may be that I've never met them
save through th'mail

th'part of my soul
that resides in
a poem
perhaps

maybe I
have met them that
way

maybe it's wish
ful thinking

we will not know this
mundane fact
this time
around

but I know this
humans have demons in'em
and those humans that do
not exorcise their own
demons
are taken over by
demons

and I know this

only a valid alive art
can do it
exorcise demons

could I be
wrong? sure

but I know it anyway — all
th'above

demons wiggle their faces in a nod
a strong
nod

GAGAKU

I keep hearing other humans have their own
demons

but
it's
not in their poems

they just say they have demons
too

they do
not exorcise their demons in their
art
which means we have a
planet of
folks full of
demons they either can
not or will
not exorcise

so I live alone & keep from them save at
cafes
where they seem
generally to be just
fine

and I say to myself I'm
perhaps a
projector
with all my demon
silly
feces

but they're there
right now with lit lamps in their
claws

and they're just walking around
in the dark
and the only light is their light
lamps
like found in any middle
class motel room

GAGAKU

the poets meet 1 another to kill
1
another

chinaski killed stantling
without
wanting to

it just happened
a 4
page satire
did it

stantling was susceptible
had taken teaching an english 1
class at
some normal
university

so I don't meet poets anymore
unless necessary

to get my own work published
through their wonderful small
press

I meet'em
and ask'em
for a hundred if
they're

interested

as you can imagine this happens
not so
often

demons come clapping their claws trying to
get into this simple
ode

fuck'em
I give'em th'middle
talon
(mine)
as they pass

GAGAKU

5-22-90

or

may 23, 1990

I'm unsure

but I know I submitted 3 poems to sun
today

to sy
at sun

and then I noted it on my
record

lined legal pad paper

and I saw I hadn't submitted for a while
2
months

hadn't
submitted
anywhere

there's power in being ignored
by say the 1 a times
and n y times

and things like
that

then a small mag editor
sends a hundred for a manuscript
and says he believes in
you

the 1 a times would
never
send
a
100

demons clap for me again
they're the audience and we're all in a
hall

I'm on stage and they clap
they're in white robes
now gray robes
the cloth does not
shine
at all

GAGAKU

just when I thought there'd
be no more

women
a fine woman

showed
here
a woman like gauguin painted
in tahiti

just like one of
those

you do
not have to

believe me
but I tell you

a woman does show
when a woman

is
needed not gagaku

now it's a month later
and I've found she works a
massage
parlor

GAGAKU

getting it all out here
all of it
no little demons left
when I rise after typing

these gagaku
they're all gone
for
awhile

GAGAKU

jerk off
over pent
house lady
of 49

it keeps you happier
than nights with the
aries girl with
cancer
rising

GAGAKU

I write or lets make it he writes
thousands and
only hundreds are printed

he writes them all to be printed
he wants a book of his work printed
thousands of pages

long
thick tome
ghastly monster of demon
pulp

is he a devil?
he asks himself aloud as he types
"is he a devil?"

it doesn't make any difference
whether he is or
not
demons jump to his shoulder as he writes
they read his page as he makes it
right on th'typewriter
roller

they applaud up there on his shoulder
somehow like
black sparrows
finches
or maybe just
blackbirds

it doesn't
matter

GAGAKU

th'8

th'most
jealous
poets of all
have th'most
typos in th'little
mags they
edit

and
now
I put this
back into th'typer

I have decided
against

liquid papering
th'8

demons shrug
don't seem to
care

and maybe I'm
wrong

maybe the most jealous poets have
no typos at all
in th'mags they
edit

like

stance 5

demons
look at me
stand at attention now at
ease
and look sidewise into
each
other's ear

GAGAKU

I
remember
 when
 Buk came over
 sat down
 looked at me
 swigged a tall brew
 and said
"they've got me down
 now
 as the anti-
 christ"

GAGAKU

take demons for instance
their full skirts
ear rings
bushy black or black-brown eyebrows
mole on
one nostril

take demons
wish them a
happy holiday

take them
with an apple in their claw
 now raising to their mouth
for a chew
a typical human chew
 a red apple
that is now a green apple
now yellow
now goldish

take demons
I do
they work well for me
I keep them
working for
me (I like to
 think)

GAGAKU

let him think about it
I told a human male to think about it
and that was that

demons
juggle osage oranges

as a california fellow I
never
heard of an osage orange
until I began working th'newspaper
crosswords about
2 months
ago

it gives me new words for my odes like
fanon

and others

demons
where have you gone?
now they juggle apples
red and delicious
now the red apples
have turned to two other kinds:
yellow & green

this is
where I come
when I want to
kill: my
writing area

usually
when I finish here
all my murder is
out of me

and when it comes back later
I come here
later

GAGAKU

well I picked up
a small mag called
PEARL
1990 issue and read a poem by lisa
glatt and it
was a good
fine
ode

strong

so strong I considered sending a letter out to
th'editor

of PEARL and asking
that a note be sent to
LG
asking for work to be
sent here

so I might publish again if I
liked
it

but

I didn't do this
for I've grown selfish

and publishing another's strong alive modern
free
verse poetry is

unselfish

demons offer me their white bare ass
now negro ass
now asian
rear

they want me to fuck'em
right there

it seems

now they giggle to one another still
bent over

GAGAKU

at 49 he still
jacks every day or so
a health device
he does not see it as
immaturity
though Aphrodite would
he met Aphrodite first in 1970
in 1966 she called him by phone
requesting
his appearance at a
festival ... ANGRY ARTS FESTIVAL
she called it
for she was the organizer
aside from beautiful
she was
rebellious
but he yelled at her on the phone
yelled a festival
was not what his art
was about
so she visited his candle
shop in 1970
early summer and seduced him
within
2 weeks
now he never forgets her
writes poem after poem about her
20 years he's been at
it
trying to exorcise his love of
her
though she said
don't try
at 49 he jacks
every day or so
because women are expensive and
confusing
Aphrodite told him I WANT TO BE
RICH

GAGAKU

they swing again on a playground
swing up and over the thick metal top bar
and they laugh as they
go round & round
up up &
over then down
and up up &
over
again
laughing
it's all silent
for I never hear them
just see
them

GAGAKU

good thing I had a legal
training
or I
wouldn't be living
here
this is paradise
my pop said "you want to leave
paradise?"
when I
blabbered upon
Hawaii
no
I'm still here pop
demons laugh
now false weep
sham tears of
plastic
runny
fiberglass

GAGAKU

well
it's not worth it to them
so I'll have to find somebody
else
somebody who'll pay some money
for my odes so I
can pay easier
my dentist &
root canal man
and kaiser health
&
edison and
southern california gas
company &
rayne water &
chevron &
visa &
master &
stop taking money from a
family trust
because rent money from a gigantic
car
wash &
faggot flower shops &
prescription glass shops &
flag shops &
markets (tiny) &
apartments
and houses &
parking lots is
landlord money
and poetry written while landlord money
pays the
bills
according to the gaggle of
socialists
just everywhere
is tainted
money

GAGAKU

lets see demons
all else is
talky

he goes through his
odes
and so many are talk
talk

so
like many others
he has a way with words

like his ma said, "you
have a way with
words"

but it's demons
that's where he breaks from the
talky
pack

he claims he exorcises them right in those
odes
bitter demons exorcised he
thinks

he's unsure
his demons?
they wiggle their hat
at him
a white hayseed
straw

a country yokel hat
then they toss it aside
it lands on dirt
and sits there
and wiggles by
itself

GAGAKU

there's a tiger on my bed
and cats
crawling upon
my cottage

there's a sun shining now
this 11 AM
saturday
1990
middle may

there's gagaku on my cheap
stereo

cheap so the burglars won't
get
much
when they
come

but the gagaku music sounds fine
and an expensive sound system would
be only
for ego
appearances
all
that

not much use to
me

a man who writes like I has
not much use for
appearances

my demons?
they don't seem to
give a
shit at
th'moment

they're swinging upon a
playground swing
supping at a park
picnic

all in a friendly group
they're
very
gregarious

GAGAKU

a true writer
writes whether or not there's
a
publisher for his
work

my demons look at each other
then at me
as if I shouldn't
use the word: demons

I pay them no attention
in so far
as following their body
language advice

I just describe them
now doing spins
like a
top

it's like a rainbow spinning
the whole intense spectrum
visible

such color to my spinning
demons

now they stop & try to stare me down
again

and now come my way
crawl into my every
orifice
and play cards within me

they sit at a card table in me
4 of'em
and play poker &
gin and WAR and
canasta
all at the same
time

GAGAKU

this is fun
I say this is fun
 he says this is fun
 the third man and the first
 man say
 this
 is
 enjoyable
 this battering away at old
 wonderful
Remington
 typer
demons too
 they wave their hands in air
 excited &
 celebratory
 this is fun
 is their
 message

GAGAKU

best to write an ode
 no one will publish
 best for me to see demons &
 write what they're
 up to
that's my core
 core of my work
 core
 of
 this
 dance

— Steve Richmond
Santa Monica CA

KING OF SPRING

He's black and blind, always impeccably dressed,
suit, button-down white shirt and blue and red striped tie,
walking in front of me with this beautiful blind
blonde, white pantyhose, white leather sandals,
talking the whole time,
she listens,
he's got her by one arm,
in his free hand a white cane
with a red tip,
walking fast, imperceptibly feeling the beginning of
grass/sidewalk edge,
at one point he twirls the
cane in his hand for a moment
like it's a baton,
King of Spring,
and just watching him I'm
King for a moment too.

UNPLUGGING THE DRAIN

It was the first hot day of
Spring
and the refrigerator finally
died,
I heroically went in and
emptied everything out, the
wilted cabbage and exotic
salad dressings, a dish of broccoli
and carrot bits left over from a
party we'd had two weeks
earlier ...
we hardly ever eat at home,

everything into the garbage
disposal
and that's that.

Two hours later Bernadette
tells me
"It's all plugged up ...
the sink."
She works on it
for an hour,
I'm trying to watch a
program on Elizabeth Bishop,
finally give up,
go upstairs and get the
toilet plunger, into the
kitchen,
one, two, three, four, five,

six,
snap,
the water goes down,
crisis over,
came back into the living
room and started watching my
show again,
she looks at me with hatred,
"You'd like to kill me
wouldn't you?" I ask.
"Yes."
Of course I didn't JUST
unplug the drain did I,
that's not the way I DO
things.

— Hugh Fox

East Lansing MI

OLD PHOTOS: 2

Here's a picture of my dad only 6 years old
standing on a vacant lot in Indianapolis
the buildings on the verge of falling down behind him.
"I can't believe they're still standing there," he says.
"And that people still live in them."
He'd been back there last summer he tells me
just to see what kind of progress 50 years would make.
"The old neighborhood still looks the same," he assures me,
easing back into the sofa. "Only the people are different."
I think back to all the stories he used to tell me
about breadlines & cabbage soup
& suddenly it's easier to see why
he'd want to live in a big 2-story house with a fireplace
drive an air-conditioned car
& look for ultimate contentment in a job he hated
8 hours a day 5 days a week 48 weeks a year 39 years to
retirement.
Back then it was totally immaterial to suburban-born me
that I got here just in time
to enjoy the world's highest standard of living
& was a teenaged credit card carrying member
of the first American generation to grow up on T.V.
& shag carpets.
The first thing I wanted to do
the very first minute I was old enough to do it
was to break out from all this suffocating opulence
& run wild in the open air
pursue the bluejean bhikku life
be a genuine wandering tennis-shoed mendicant

like the beatific beat saints of old
& find immortality as a regular married-to-poverty
backpacking bum.

I didn't want anything to do with
prison-grey suits, white shirt straightjackets or
choking striped ties.

Dad turns the pages of his life with the photos
& starts telling his old war stories again
about sweating his way through the jungles of Burma.
He swears he still has the scar from the shell that
sideswiped his back.

I ask him if he had it to do all over again
would he fight? "No," he says. "I don't think I would."
Which surprises me, WWII being the good war & all
& knowing too that our impending argument over whether
COs could still love their country right or wrong
had only been prevented by the Saigon airlift. But now,
in a voice as mellow as the 12-year-old Scotch he's
balancing on his knee,
dad tells me about the day he was discharged from the army
& found himself standing alone at a Greyhound bus station
in Boston:

"Up to that point there'd always been someone
giving me orders saying what I had to do where
I had to go & then all of a sudden there I was
on my own with no one to tell me to go up to
that bus ticket window & buy that bus ticket
home."

Right at that moment he could've gone anywhere in the
world he wanted,
but the only place he wanted to go was home.
I remember one night walking down a deserted country road
looking for a dry place to unroll my sleeping bag &
enjoy a few moments of sleepful oblivion.
I was thinking how nice it would be just to be home
to sit by the fire with a cup of hot tea
& go to sleep in my own bed with my own soft pillow.
But the rain was falling down; my sleeping bag was soaked.
There was nothing to do but walk on.
Now here I am,
sitting with my dad looking at the old photos all cozy
by the fireplace
knowing that home isn't really home any more
once you've gone.

THE VACANT CHAIR

There's a chair at the table no one sits in
because it used to be grandpa's.
He died just three weeks before I made it home.
He was 96 years old. I never got to see him,
only the place where he was buried

in the old Massillon cemetery with a hard granite tombstone
over his head. He'd gone away, just like me.
Told me that the ones who didn't like to roam stayed home,
meaning the folks back in the old country
who still live on the land they've lived on for generations.
Technically the State now owns the land.
But centuries into the future if there be any people
the roots of our family tree will still be buried deep
or land at all
in that soil
and the tree will be sprouting new buds.
Maybe by then the State will have withered away.
I went back to the old country once to visit the relatives.
I saw their mud-plaster homes and grape arbors.
I drank their good peasant wine and their good peasant food.
One of my cousins had married a soldier.
He goosestepped over for the introductions,
then stood there at attention, icy formal,
all straight up in his uniform, hat and medals,
proud scowl on his thin lips and blinkless eyes.
I smiled at him in my blue jeans and tennis shoes and
said "Howdy!"

The goodbyes were harder:
hugging all my aunts,
big buxom Bulgarian women I could hardly get my arms around.
When I shook my uncle's hand
I could feel just how calloused and proletarian it was,
how bourgeois mine was in comparison.
So this is what grandpa left. He'd told me all about
fighting in the Balkans, deserting the army, stow-
awayng across the oceans, crossing the Peace
Bridge, hoboin from town to jobless town
until he finally ended up here, me looking on
with places of my own to go to
before my own chair is empty.

— Richard Evanoff

Tokyo, Japan

WHEN THE IRS COMES KNOCKING

— for Scott Preston

i'm not sure they'll believe me
when i tell them
that, in this day and age
of upward mobility,
i have lived on an income
of less than 6,000 a year
for the last 5 years.

and lived quite comfortably too.

i have this paranoia
of them tearing my book shelves apart
carting off box loads of manuscripts
falsifying my records

i have this thought
that, in their eyes,
a taxpayer is suspect if:
either too prosperous or
not prosperous enough. that it should be
against the law to earn less than
middle-class taxable incomes.

RATTLESNAKES AND GUITARS

this Mexican man showed me
when i was a dozen years old
the rattlesnake rattles
he kept in his guitar
for good luck. he shook the guitar
for effect as he played.

i've found it a good place
to store all my spare picks,
i just dump 'em in there
and the guitar rattles, and
when i need another, i just turn her
upsidedown and empty one out.

HOW DO YOU SAY

on the car radio
the disk jockey just made
the perennial mispronunciation of
Illinois Jacquet's name, making
it sound French with: Já-Kày.
which is how we all said it
until i met Illinois' trumpet-playing
brother Russell and he jumped
out of his skin, "It's Jacket! Jacket!"
which led me to believe
he's been trying to straighten
this problem out
all his life.

A NEW LID

Willie Nelson does this changing hat bit
where in concert
the audience throws up various type hats

and he'll wear them as fits his fancy
then throw them back.
Last night, while into the middle
of a song
somebody tossed one up
and Willie still singing gauged the toss
made it to the end of a verse stretching
his arm a bit
and then made a quick side-step,
caught the hat and jumped back to the mike
just in time to pick up the lyric
without missing a beat.
The crowd loved it
and he put it on smiling —
a big old white brimmed riverboat cardshark hat.

THE WAY IT GOES

the ancient Natufians
of 8,000 years ago
lived in the wooded hills of Israel

an agricultural
neolithic society
of about 2,000

made plaster
for their floors and walls
from mined black limestone & coal
baked long & hot with wood
till white & granulated

cooled &
mixed with water
for application.

this they did until there were
no more trees

no more wood to cook their limestone

the big bones of wild sheep & feral cattle
disappear too.

men who dig these things up
begin to find mud floors and smaller bones
of domesticated animals

these later Natufians
probably blamed it on the Gods
and left the bare rocky hills
to find further development possibilities

there are still no trees there

only a freeway driving through
their ancient village.

11 AUGUST 1989

shopping baskets
from the supermarket
litter the neighborhood

28 AUGUST 1989

ah! boiled coffee
to start off the day

WHEN THE WOLF IS BITING AT THE LACE CURTAINS

— for Tom Albach

he's been biting now, Tom,
been biting for quite some time
but it's hard to starve in America these days
plenty of food, grudgingly handed out yes, but ...
one has to be perty stupid to die of hunger in the
U.S. of A. anymore
i eat mostly beans, pinto beans, Tom, potatoes,
pull up a few mustard greens and steam them, dig up the
verde lagas and butter-steam them in a short pan, cut
down the fresh leaves of the nopale cactus and
with lemon keep them in a pan for awhile too

the wolf ain't a wolf, even tho he's there, he's a
coyote, Tom,
the trickster of the Western Desert, the comical joker
who'll steal you blind and laugh while you die —
I know you've sat around
with dope-smoking Injuns, so know you know about Coyote

this food, Tom, not only does Coyote not like it,
it keeps the buzzards and the man with the sythe away —
that man with the sythe wears a Coyote mask and bends down
in our sleep for our last words ...
spit in his face Tom,
tho Coyote will laugh, the Scythe Man standing at his side,
both laughing,

spit.

— Mark Weber

Salt Lake City UT

SLICING HELL

listen, I forgive all you girls who used to live with me, all of you, that is, who used to go out and find another man to fuck or to snort coke with or to drink with or just talk too — or all or any of those things or maybe some things I haven't thought of ...

I now realize that oftentimes I was a dull person and also by nature not much good at verbally expressing my affection, and also most of the times none of us were interested in the same thing and/or things ...

but I must tell you that then it was different, difficult for me to forgive or understand; I remember many nights of slicing hell

just looking at the walls

or an unmade bed

or yesterday's newspapers on the floor; the moments and minutes hanging inside my head, and there were always female things about: clothes in the closet, shoes; things on the dresser and in the bathroom ...

and then there was my ego, never being able to understand how any of you could ever prefer anybody else to me ...

I didn't have a high account of humanity then, still don't ...

there were so many nights walking across a room — having it hit me, doubling over, grabbing my gut with both hands, saying, "shit, shit, shit ..."

trying to drink it away, going into cheap bars, looking, seldom finding and, when finding, getting into an act I really didn't want except out of some cheap kind of vengeance which I disliked because I was only reacting to all of you instead of doing whatever should have been naturally done.

but you know I never would have met any of you if you hadn't left somebody else or been discarded by somebody else —

so here's to the good nights among all the bad: at their best we had as much style and joy as anybody

and I forgive all of you finally for teaching
me the way:
each woman is a re-occurrence of the same
woman.
you're all nice girls and if there's a heaven
somewhere
there's a big smile there and it's all of you
smiling
as the great white shark whirls in captivity
with stunned eyes dumb, dumb stunned
eyes

THE DARLINGS

a world full of successful people's
sons
on bicycles
on the Hollywood Riviera
at 3:11 P.M.
on a Tuesday afternoon ...

this is what some of the armies
died to save
this is what many of the ladies
desire:
these stuffed fractions of
beings
pedalling along
or stopping to chat while
still seated upon their mounts
gentle breezes sifting across
their undisturbed faces ...

I understand very little of this
except maybe the armies killed the
wrong people
but they usually do:
they always think the enemy is
those they are directed against
instead of those who
direct them:
the fathers of the
darlings.

— Charles Bukowski

San Pedro CA

SPECIAL FEATURE:.....

There are increasing numbers of individuals writing to find where they can get long-term access to complete or long runs of WORMWOOD for research purposes. To assist these individuals and to publicly recognize the sustaining role of the libraries in WORMWOOD's long life, the editor has prepared the following list of institutions with significant collections of the magazine. An asterisk indicates collections going back to Issue 1. Zip codes are included to prevent ambiguity. Parentheses indicate no current subscription. In the past 3 years, there have been budget cuts for many libraries and little mags are usually the first to be dropped. Some degree of reader protest would be useful in reducing this trend. After all, it is the non-vanity little magazines that make literary discoveries rather than the safe, so-called establishment magazines.

ALABAMA: (U. Southern Alabama, 36608). ARIZONA: Arizona State U., Tempe, 85287; (Northern Arizona U., Flagstaff, 86001); Phoenix Public Library, 85004; (PIMA Community College, Tucson, 85709); U. Arizona, Tucson, 85721.

ARKANSAS: * U. Arkansas, Fayetteville, 72701. AUSTRALIA: State Library of South Australia, 5001; Sydney U., 2006. CALIFORNIA: California State U., Dominguez Hills, 90747; California State U., Long Beach, 90840; (California State U., Northridge, 91330); (California College of Arts and Crafts, 94618); (California Institute of the Arts, 91321); Claremont Colleges, 91711; Huntington Beach Public Library, 92648; Los Angeles Public Library, 90071; (Orange Coast College, 92626); (Pomona College, 91711); San Diego State U., 92182; San Francisco Public Library, 94102; Stanford U., 94305; Stockton Public Library, 95202;

(Torrey Pines High School Library, 92024); (* U. California, Berkeley 94720); U. California, Davis, 95616; U. California, Irvine, 92713; U. California, Los Angeles, 90024; U. California, Riverside, 92517; U. California, San Diego, 92093; U. California, Santa Barbara, 93106; U. of the Pacific, 95211. CANADA: (Hamilton Public Library, L8P 2Y8); (Memorial U. of Newfoundland, A1B 3Y1); * Mount Allison U., E0A 3C0; National Library of Canada K1A 0N4; * St. Michael's College, Toronto, M5S 1J4; Simon Fraser U., V5A 1S6; U. British Columbia V6T 1Z8; U. of Windsor, N9B 3P4; York U., M3J 1P3. COLORADO: Colorado State U., Ft. Collins, 80523; U. Colorado, 80309.

CONNECTICUT: Central Connecticut State U., 06050; (Matawuck Community College, 06708); (Southbury Public Library, 06488); * U. Connecticut, 06268; Wesleyan U., 06457; (Willimantic Public Library, 06226); Yale U., 06520. DELAWARE: U. Delaware, 19717. DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: Georgetown U., 20057. ENGLAND: * Bodleian Library, Oxford, OX1-3BG; * British Library, London, WC1B-3DG;

Manchester Polytechnic, MI5-6BH; National Poetry Library, SE1-8XX; University College London, WC1E-6BT. FLORIDA: (Clearwater Public Library, 33515); Florida International U., 33199; (Palm Beach Atlantic College, 33401); * U. Florida, Gainesville, 32611; U. North Florida, 32216. HAWAII: Hawaii Pacific College, 96813. IDAHO: (Idaho State U., 83209). ILLINOIS: * Chicago Public Library, 60602; Illinois State U., Normal, 61761; Northeastern Illinois U., 60625; * Northwestern U., 60208; Southern Illinois U., 62901; U. Chicago, 60637; * U. Illinois, Urbana, 61801; (Western Illinois U., 61455). INDIANA: * Purdue U., 47907. IOWA: Iowa State U., Ames, 50011; U. Iowa, Iowa City, 52242. KANSAS: (Fort Scott Community Junior College, 66701); U. Kansas, 66045; Wichita State U., 67208. KENTUCKY: Eastern Kentucky U., 40475; * U. Kentucky, 40506. LOUISIANA: * Louisiana State U., Baton Rouge, 70803; Louisiana State U., New Orleans, 70122; U. Southwestern Louisiana, 70504. MARYLAND: * The Johns Hopkins U., 21218; St. Mary's College of Maryland, 20686; (U. Maryland, Baltimore Co., 21228). MASSACHUSETTS: (Adams Library, Chelmsford, 01824); Amherst College 01002; * Boston Public Library, 02117; * Harvard College, 02138; * Wellesley College 02181; Western New England College, 01119. MICHIGAN: Detroit Public Library, 48202; Michigan State U., 48824; * University Microfilms, 48106. MINNESOTA: (Moorhead State U., 56560). MISSISSIPPI: * U. Mississippi, 38677. MISSOURI: (U. Missouri, Columbia, 65201); * Washington U., 63130. MONTANA: (Eastern Montana College, 59101). NEBRASKA: (U. Nebraska, Omaha, 68182). NEW JERSEY: County College of Morris, 07869; (Douglass College, 08903); Free Public Library, Woodbridge, 07095; Glassboro State College, 08028; (Montclair Public Library, 07042); (Phillipsburg Public Library, 08865); * Princeton U., 08540; Trenton State College, 08650. NEW MEXICO: U. New Mexico, 87131. NEW YORK: (Brooklyn College Library, 11210); * Brooklyn Public Library, 11238; (Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines, 10012); * Cornell U., 14853; Fulton-Montgomery Community College, 12095; Hobart & Wm. Smith Colleges, 14456; * New York Public Library, 10163; (New York State Library, 12230); (Rochester Public Library, 14604); (Sachem Public Library, 11741); (State U. of New York, Binghamton, 13901); * State U. of New York, Buffalo, 14260; (State U. of New York, Old Westbury, 11568); State U. College, Brockport, 14420; Syracuse U., 13210; U. of New York, Albany, 12222. NORTH CAROLINA: Duke U., 27706; U. North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 27599. NORTH DAKOTA: North Dakota State School of Science, 58075. OHIO: * Ohio State U., 43210; U. of Akron, 44325; U. of Cincinnati, 45221. OKLAHOMA: Central State U., Edmond, 73034. OREGON: Linfield College, 97128; * U. Oregon, 97403. PENNSYLVANIA: Cedar Crest College, 18104; (Edinboro State College, 16444); Indiana U. of Pennsylvania, 15705; (James V. Brown Library, Williamsport, 17701); Temple U., 19122; U. Pennsylvania,

15260; U. Pittsburgh, 15260. RHODE ISLAND: * Brown U., 02912; Roger Williams College, 02809; (* U. Rhode Island, 02881). SOUTH CAROLINA: (College of Charleston, 29401); Clemson U., 29634. TENNESSEE: Austin Peay State U., 37044; East Tennessee State U., 37614; (Memphis Public Library and Information Center, 38104); U. Tennessee, 37996. TEXAS: Texas Woman's U., 76204; * U. Texas, Austin, 78713; U. Texas, El Paso, 79968. UTAH: U. Utah, 84112. VIRGINIA: Longwood College, 23901; U. Virginia, 22903. WASHINGTON: Bellevue Community College, 98009; Des Moines Library, 98198; * U. Washington, 98195; Washington State U., 99164; Western Washington U., 98225. WEST VIRGINIA: (West Virginia U., 26506). WISCONSIN: (South Milwaukee Public Library, 53172); (U. Wisconsin, La Crosse, 54601); * U. Wisconsin, Madison, 53706. WYOMING: U. WYOMING: U. Wyoming, 82071.

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‡ Mc — McDaniel, Wilma Elizabeth/109: 15-26 (Fourteen And Feeling It); 118-119: 49-96 (A Girl From Buttonwillow); McLeod, Donald/120: 110;

‡ M — Malone, Marvin (see: M.K. Book, Saul Manilla & Ernest Stranger); 118-119: 90-96; 120: 140-142; Manilla, Saul (Malone, Marvin)/109: 13-14; Marchant, Frederick J./116: 97-98; Monaco, Cory/117: 7-8; Moore, Todd/109: 30; 112: (Wormwood Award: 1985); Morris, Peter/112: 105-118 (Pirates Cry);

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