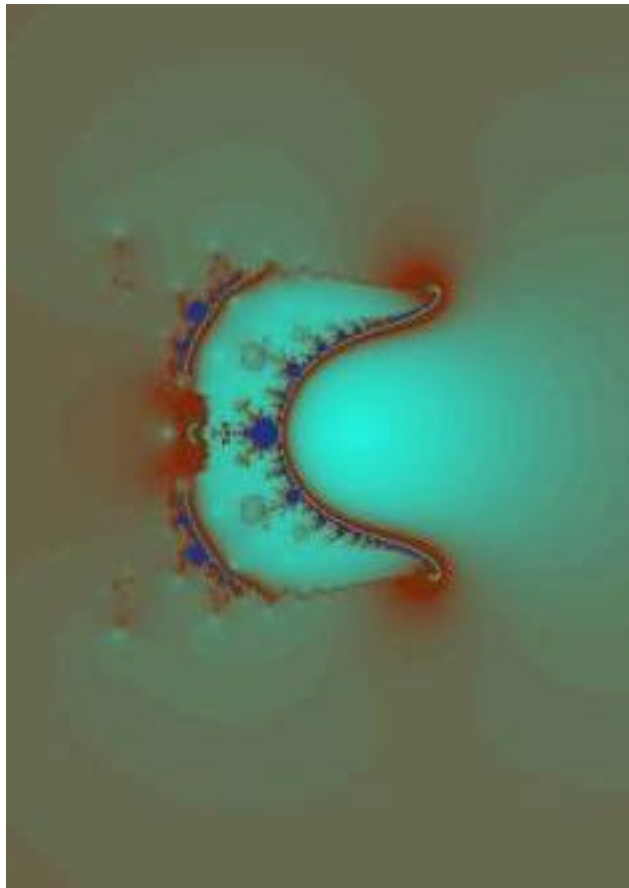


Theory of Harmony



Halvard Johnson

xPress(ed)

Theory of Harmony by Halvard Johnson

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The Drunken Boat: Something Japanese; Gold, Frankincense, and Mirth

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Reckless Talk from a Girl on the Lam; Halvard Johnson by Halvard Johnson; Soap

Tattoo Highway: Thrust

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For Lynda

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She Who Sleeps With a Small Blanket

1.

she broke off short ate without relish came back,
took the kettle from the fire began to make buttered toast
gave him a cuff on the head spoke to her husband
set down the heavy suitcase that had made her arm ache

2.

she looked out through the windows of the hotel lounge,
looked up to see his secretary come in patted her own head
in an absent-minded way brought him many thick legal-sized envelopes
wore an air of shyness smiled went out to watch the sunset

3.

she had spoken with more clearness than seemed necessary brushed
her dark hair mechanically hesitated, then spoke glanced about
as if in embarrassment gulped trembled poked her head in
at the door came stalking into the room

4.

she discovered she was speaking to empty air toddled
at full speed toward the river ran headlong after her turned to the car
rushed to assist her mother began to move about among the old gravestones
felt she had been unkind prowled about the building

5.

she slid a single sheet from the envelope took no pleasure in it
slipped off the wrappings, moved the excelsior aside recoiled
stopped there every evening on her way home lifted the door of her mailbox
stepped out and waited sat down hard, without dignity

6.

she trotted into the guest bathroom knew how to manage
peered at her bottle of pills, but did not touch it put her head down
felt guilty cocked an eye at the bare midriff understood as much
as there was to understand smiled to herself and sighed

7.

she took a personal interest watched the houses opposite being built
looked out on birch trees and green turf ignored all of his remarks
used the path as a short-cut from the station knitted away in dark blue
read her paper from cover to cover telephoned the police

8.

she sipped her coffee and quietly contemplated devils dressed for her dinner
smoothed back her hair scribbled a note reviewed a few facts
in her mind whispered, "I will" locked her door and went to bed
woke up suddenly and in fright fell again into sleep

9.

she enjoyed those months turned from the window of the train
had been wax in her husband's hands told him quite calmly the answers to his questions
hurried away seemed almost her old self refused to accept anything
seemed oddly watchful never returned home began to mend

[source text: *Ms. Murder*, ed. Marie Smith—a collection of mystery stories featuring women
detectives by women writers: New York, Citadel Press, 1989]

How to Be a Private Eye

1.

Eat two pork sandwiches, a side order of Brunswick stew, and a cup of gritty black coffee at Foster's Barbecue Hut. Order another cup of coffee to go.

2.

Take up your stake-out position in the rear lot of Cooksie's Texaco station looking out over an unmowed meadow toward a one-story frame house.

3.

Make your coffee last until sunset, letting the last few drops go down like chilled linseed oil.

4.

Watch as someone drives up and parks parallel to the house under the cork elms drooping over the front porch, pausing in the light of the porch light to look up and down the street before knocking, looking right up at Cooksie's for a second.

5.

When the big man doesn't see you, let your breath out in a nervous burst.

6.

Get out of your car and scamper down the incline behind the service station into the meadow beside the house. Creep around to the back, climb to a rickety screened porch, ease your way through the unlatched door. Step up onto an old railway bench to see what you can see.

7.

Count yourself lucky that the same loud rock music that prevents you from getting any kind of good recording muffles the telltale bumps and creakings of your maneuvers on the bench.

8.

Take a couple photographs and step down from the bench, knocking loose as you do a slat from the back of the bench, which falls clattering into an empty metal basin underneath it.

9.

Hop through the door and down the dilapidated rear steps, moon rolling out from behind a cloud to spotlight your getaway. Avoid revealing the location of your car by heading for a drainage ditch instead of Cooksie's.

10.

Crouching low in the grass, watch the two men come out onto the porch, down the exterior steps, and into the dewy September meadow. Hear the smaller one shout, "Leave us alone. Leave us alone!"

[source text: "Unlikely Friends" by Michael Bishop: *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*, Nov. 1982]

Operative Light

1.

Facing the music snatches of dialogue he said,
"Does your head hurt?" she said, "No"
moments when everything seems personal summery clothes
make me nervous sweet defilements something wholly primitive

2.

Carrying my scrapbook giving in to nothing killing people
because I like to woken by a sudden shock of pain
nobody gives us anything hair combed back from her forehead
coming to our rescue shining water under the streetlights

3.

Plunging downward drifting down beside her familiar,
troubled world wanting to say it out loud living on credit
extending one hand toward the sun a little like standing
on the corner shaving the dog for the summer

4.

Slapping the surface of the table having been dead
for years now jumping up to see if you were really there
sitting on the church steps balancing the dream against
the falling light glad that you're okay

5.

Sitting with the gun across his knees massaging his knuckles
moonrise white over water listening to her pretending
to listen to him flights to some distant cities true, but separate
clear as could be in the silent air thinking of the evening coming up

Theory of Harmony

i.

In your works
(Kandinsky writes in 1911)
you have realized
what I have so greatly
longed for in music —
 the independent
 progress through
 their own destinies,
 the independent life
 of the independent
 voices.

ii.

 Our work,
Schoenberg responds,
 has much in common.
What you call
 the “unlogical”
I call “elimination
 of the conscious
will in art.”
 Art belongs to
the unconscious!
 One must express
oneself! Express
 oneself directly!

iii. (1911)

Dissonances are nothing
(Schoenberg writes)
more than remoter
consonances.

iv. (1911)

I envy you so!
(says K). You have

your *Theory of Harmony*
already in print.

How lucky musicians are
to have such a highly advanced

art. Truly, music is an art
which has the fortune to forego

completely all practical aims.
How long will painting have

to wait for this? It has
the right—no, the duty—

to forego these also, to use
color and line for their own sakes.

In painting we may now at least dream
of a “Theory of Harmony.” I dream

and hope that I will write
at least the first sentences

of this great future book.
Perhaps someone else will do the same.

All the better! Just as many
as possible. When one has understood

to some extent how St. Stephan’s
in Vienna is built, perhaps one will be

able to stick together a rough little hut.

v. (1911)

Dear Mr. Kandinsky (S writes),

I cannot come on Wednesday after all.
Rather I will come on Thursday the 14th,
if you do not write to the contrary.
I can also come Friday or Saturday,

perhaps even Sunday.

Can you recommend me a doctor (perhaps a specialist)? My daughter has had for some time a skin ailment on her feet—open, festering sores. We think it is a constitutional problem, connected with malnutrition and anemia, and have adequate grounds for this opinion.

I would like very much to know of a competent doctor, who does not demand colossal sums. I am not a rich man. Quite the contrary—I am a capable musician! If possible, recommend to me someone from Munich who could charge me “artists’ prices” as it were.

vi. (1911)

From Berlin, S later writes about K’s pictures:

They made a great and lasting impression on me. Much is still before my eyes. The dreamlike nature of the impressions, wild yet clearly controlled. And the incredibly strong effect of the colors. I would love to see them again.

And he comments on the “remarkable yet womanly strength” in the picture of Gabriele Munter, K’s wife, which touch him “extraordinarily.”

I am living in great style here. Right in the woods!! Actually right in the country, almost an hour away from Berlin proper. I wish that you could see it. The Berlin landscape has a peculiar beauty completely different from that of the Viennese landscape.

vii. (1911)

K writes about S's pictures:

In your pictures I see a great deal.

And two roots:

1. Pure realism—things as they are and their inner sonority, what I foretold in my book as "fantasy in the most austere subject matter." It is at the opposite pole from my own art and grows spiritually out of the same root: a chair lives, a line lives—and that is finally and fundamentally the same.

2. Dematerialization. This interests me but does not make me vibrate spiritually, for it is too binding, too precise. When something of the sort stirs in me, I would write but never paint it. Thus I say merely: he had a white face and black lips. That is more than enough for me. I feel more and more strongly that in every work an empty space must remain. Not an eternal law, but a law of "tomorrow."

viii.

ix. (1911)

S writes:

We search on and on (as you yourself say)
with our feelings.

Let us endeavor never to lose
these feelings to a theory.

x. (An exchange, Dec. 1911 — Jan. 1912)

S: There is something that I cannot reconcile myself to: the format, the size. I also have a theoretical objection: since it is only a question of proportions, for example

black 24:	white 120
by red 12:	yellow 84

it cannot possible depend on the format, because I can certainly say the same thing if I reduce it, for example, by 12:

black 2:	white 10
by red 1:	yellow 7

I believe it is easier to grasp this equation if it is reduced.

K: Naturally, I must disagree! In mathematics $4:2 = 8:4$. In art, no. In mathematics $1 + 1 = 2$, in art $1 - 1 = 2$ can also exist.

xi. (1912)

Schoenberg to Kandinsky, somewhat petulantly:

And what have you to say
about my *Theory of Harmony*?

I sent it to you immediately
after I got it, as I was getting flu.

xii. (1912)

Kandinsky to Schoenberg, with exasperation:

There are days when I get letters with each
of the five mail deliveries, there are days
with twenty incoming letters, and there is never
a day without letters. I owe letters. I don't paint.

from all your taken in the abstract,
writings. is only relative and

xvi (1912)

The fact is
that the greatest necessity
for musicians today
is the overthrow
of the
“eternal laws of harmony”
which
for painters
is only
a matter of secondary importance.

With us
the most necessary thing
is to show
the possibilities
of composition (or construction)
and to set up
a general (very general)
principle.

That
is the task
which I have begun
in my book
—in very free strokes.

“Inner necessity”
is just a thermometer
(or yardstick)
but one
which leads to
the greatest freedom
and
at the same time
sets up the inner capacity
to comprehend
as the only limitation
on this freedom.

In the continuation
of the work
which now is ripening in me
step by step
I touch
in moments of illumination
on the universal root
of all forms of expression.

Sometimes
I would like to bite
my elbow with rage
that the work
advances
so slowly.

xvii. (1912)
Kandinsky, again:

Briefly stated,
there is a law which is millions of kilometers distant from us,
towards which
we strive for thousands of years,
of which
we have a presentiment, which we guess, apparently
see clearly
and therefore give various forms.

Thus
is the evolution of "God," religion, science, art.
And all these
forms are "right," since they have all been seen.
Except
that they are all false, since they are one-sided.
And evolution
consists only of this, that everything appears many-sided,
complicated.
And behind
this final law, much farther away still, is another one,
since this
first law is also only one side. It could drive you mad
or make
you sing Hosanna.

xviii. (1912-14)

Dear Mr. S.:
Your letter gave
me great pleasure.
It's fine that
you have so much
to do and that you
are being performed
so much. But on the
other hand, such
successes have bad
consequences. They
come, chop up your
time and devour it.

Dear Mr. K.:
I am perpetually
having to do
unpleasant things
and struggle with
weariness after-
wards. It is sad so
that one has no
desire to do any-
thing: neither to
work nor to write
letters. Don't be
angry with me!

Dear Mr. S.:
One really becomes
giddy—the four
seasons—white,
pink, green,
orange—rush by
One imagines
in one's mind
twenty such
rotations and
sees oneself as
an old man. And
the work is really
only beginning.

xix. (July 3, 1922)

I was very disappointed
when I arrived in Berlin and heard
that you were no longer there.
When our journey
was first being planned, I rejoiced
to think that I would find you in Berlin.
However, I was told:
Schoenberg has left and will not
be coming back any more.
And letters are such an awkward substitute.
I had hoped that we would see
each other very often
and discuss so many questions.
Everything has really changed
since our time together
in Bavaria. Much that was a daring dream
at that time has now become the past.
We have experienced centuries.

xx. (July 20, 1922)

I can understand
your being surprised
by the artistic situation
in Berlin. But are you also

pleased about it?
Personally, I haven't much
taste for all these movements,
but at least I don't have to worry
that they'll irritate me
for long. Nothing comes to a standstill
sooner than these movements brought
about by so many people.

How is your book *Das Geistige in der Kunst*
getting on? I think of it because
it appeared at the same time
as my *Harmonielehre*, a much revised
new edition of which I am sending
to the printers. It may interest you
to know that I am at present working on
"Jacob's Ladder." I began it several years ago,
but had to break off work (at one of the most rapt passages)
in order to join the army. Since then I've never
gotten back into the mood to go on with it.

Well, now I've gone jabbering on
like a small child, which I actually stopped being
some decades ago. But that's the way it is
with letter-writing: by the time one's warmed up,
one is also worn out.

xxi. (April 15, 1923)

Only the frantic

tempo of present-day life

can explain my long silence.

It is exactly like a bad dream —

you want to jump onto a departing

train, run with all your might, but your

legs cannot keep up with you so fast. I thought

at first that this was only a Russian way of living, and

hoped to find another life here — with more possibility for

concentration. In Berlin I led a particularly hurried life, which

I regarded as temporary, since I hoped to find sufficient

peace in “quiet Weimar.” This was an illusion, however.

I never can accomplish half of what I would like to.

And all the same it is nice here: there are many

possibilities and above all the possibility of

forming a center that can radiate out

and ignite others. But to do this,

prominent forces beyond our

circle are necessary. How

often I have said to

myself: “If only

Schoenberg

were here!”

xxii. (April 19, 1923)

I have at last learnt the lesson that has been forced upon me during this year and I shall not ever forget it.
It is that I am not a German, not a European, indeed perhaps scarcely even a human being (at least the Europeans prefer the worst of their race to me), but I am a Jew.

I am content that it should be so! Today I no longer wish to be an exception; I have no objection at all to being lumped together with the rest. For I have seen that on the other side everything is

also just one lump. I have seen that someone with whom I thought myself on a level preferred to seek the community of the lump; I have heard that even a Kandinsky sees only evil in the actions of Jews

and in their evil actions only the Jewishness, and at this point I give up hope of reaching any understanding.

It was a dream. We are two kinds of people. Definitively!

So you will realize that I only do whatever is necessary to keep alive. Perhaps someday a later generation will be in a position to indulge in dreams. I wish it neither for them nor for myself.

On the contrary, indeed, I would give much that it might be granted to me to bring about an awakening.

I should like the Kandinsky I knew in the past and the Kandinsky of today

each to take his fair share of my cordial and respectful greetings.

[source text: *Arnold Schoenberg, Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures and Documents*, ed. Jelena Hahl-Koch; trans. John C. Crawford: London, Faber and Faber, 1984]

Fat Lady Sings

1.

sitting at his desk in the twilight noticing that the sun
had already gone down oblivious to misty, blotted out stone
waiting for a flow of inspiration taking circuitous routes
in the semi-darkness half-inclined to self-effacement

2.

spinning out sentences that were endless telling of stolen hollyhocks
computing the number of cows living in Pennsylvania during the 30's
emerging suddenly from her room distantly related to a family down the road
this and that, this and that removed at last from actuality and from life

3.

enjoying his ignorance of her singing above the clack of her typewriter keys
being free in her anonymity disregarding Greek faces, Christian hymns
detecting some hidden music sitting all day at his desk intending to follow
the roads he'd mapped out sad and unhappy, uncertain and determined

4.

willing to buy stocks already sunken to unheard-of depths gathering manna
like dew falling from heaven stealing fixtures from the rental houses
praised at the club toilets or bathtubs didn't matter
knowing what it meant to drive a hearse at age of twelve

5.

keeping busy unable to afford to stop old now,
needing a special coffin might be her husband or son
shouting back and forth giving directions not believing
him for a minute unable to imagine spring

Alleged Variations

"There are no answers. Then, of course, there are answers but the final answer makes the questions seem absurd, whereas the questions up until then seem more intelligent than the answers."

—John Cage, "45' for a Speaker"

1.

There are no answers then. I don't know why
I thought there were. Do you? Even the atom begs
to be split. Two hazel eyes, like the twin

ends of a divining rod. We're left without fuel but with,
after all, a sense that our lives do matter.

2.

No answers then, of course. We contemplate the profound,
along with the mundane, soaked as it was in yellow light.

Lightly, the culture bends to the wind blowing up along
the river. The sky so pure you'd think

clarity was our base of operations. How can we
say, "like life itself," having no idea what that means?

3.

Then, of course, there are answers. They saw it happening
as they passed along the road beside that grove of trees.
Which was why, often, the cemeteries here are so calming.
"Look," I whispered. "Over there. Don't you see it?"

Returning at sundown, but not asking you to reveal anything
you didn't feel like revealing, I thought I might try once again
to win your approval and admiration. You kept to yourself,
though, taking your daily lessons down by the harbor.

4.

The final answer makes monkeys of us all,
say some, whose coastal hills shed great fervor
down upon the stark Pacific.

California reduced
to a net of legal mayhem, visible to all
with eyes to look.

He had aplomb aplenty, but lacked, somehow, panache.
The silent house, meanwhile, dreamt of vacancy.

5.

The questions seem absurd, always. Avoidance
of silence becomes, for us, a spiritual quest,
living where we do at the intersection of fear and bravado.
Keeping one hand at all times on the steering wheel,
we find, at last, that "final image" should read
"sixth image," and that our indifference to all those miles
outstretched of barren desert terrain was in fact
well founded. We have gone off to live as we must,
no more intelligent than the answers we'd been seeking.

Feathery Elbows

*"The thing to remember is that each time of life
has its appropriate rewards, whereas when you're
dead it's hard to find the light switch."*

—Woody Allen, "On Youth and Age"

The cannonball touching
my marriage serves several
occasions, complex

females notwithstanding.
Music builds across
a football field. A blonde

with a big smile reminds
me of a shepherd
wandering in the Gulf

of Aqaba. One man sees
spirits, another falls by
the sword, another

finds himself running
in the Preakness.
How late it is!

for David Graham

[source text: Woody Allen, *Without Feathers*]

7 Sinners

Marybelle fails to communicate at every
turn she waffles falls into a brownish
study and nothing is harder than to drag
the river for her unspoken palabras.

Jerzy always manages to butter up the wrong
side of his simple morning toast
masters the art of misapplied food spreads
out upon the table water has been

polluted beyond redemption. Jake
fights his other hand extended in gestures
too menacing for words about money
about spending habits about face.

Julia as we called her mother
on the other line reworked the walls of her
small comfy suburban marketplace
until adulterous conduct

became part of the money issue some sort
of edict for Paul her hubby as she
liked to call him despite his penchant for
catering to women beyond his means

and weighs no fault divorce not an
option unless of course Ethel that
high toned arrogant slut murders his
current wife for him and soon.

Allure

1.

Her lowered eyes looked naked. She felt she had turned to liquid.

Resigned by now, she didn't even give him a look.

She walked to the grocery store and placed an order for chicken livers in an imperious, brazen manner, as if she were another kind of woman entirely.

2.

The whole thing got to be a nuisance. When he found, at last, his kind of woman, the blonde was reading a magazine and never gave him so much as a glance. Were some people born without the ability to link one moment to the next? No answer. The shower curtain screeched across the rod.

3.

Her fingers started traveling down to his belt buckle. He made no move to stop her. Outside, the sun was blinding. People stood back a little to let them pass. She wished they'd driven over from the church. Her pumps had developed a thick film of dust. The stony old house they were passing seemed for a moment to shimmer.

4.

People were squandering their lives, it seemed to him. At fifty years old, he had never accomplished one single act of consequence. Like today, for instance: trailing a hand out the window as they whizzed down Route One toward home, a hot, gasoline-smelling breeze. The opening and shutting of the window, getting on his nerves.

5.

One day he didn't come out of the forest, though she waited for hours for him to appear. She got out of the car and went over to the cedar-chip-carpeted running track. Still, no sign of him. Other runners pounded past her, glancing over momentarily, giving her the impression that they were leaving their faces behind.

[source text: Anne Tyler, *Breathing Lessons*]

Thrust

1.

Because of the impending storm, all smart dames get in a three-hour run before dinner, returning home disgruntled, not ever knowing quite what it was that pissed them off. Their husbands' children greet them at the elevator door with a "Hi, Mom," in which Mom is forever in quotes.

2.

Because of the impending storm, embraceable young things snuggle through awkward reunions and poignant finales as best they can. They hear people's voices before they see the people themselves, and yet they somehow know exactly what they are saying. They know the tops of their boyfriends' heads better than they know their faces.

3.

Because of the impending storm, strings of anecdotes lose their sting and the men in the living room subside to vague forgetfulness. Bittersweet jazz lulls them to sleep, and hands do lazy short-hand in the purified air. Back at home again the man with our mother fumbles the key into the lock and winces when we call him Dad.

Time Zones

"How do I understand the time?"

—Maxianne Berger

1.

The green zone comes at you in a fury, hurling expletives, diminishing your potential for whatever you were about to do. You want to fight back, but cannot lift your hands from your side, or even raise your voice.

2.

The grey zone responds to your advances with kindness, although it's always trailing off into this or that. Whenever you sit down together, it's on its feet in a minute and off into some other room altogether.

3.

The orange zone puzzles even me. I've never understood its burnished questions. Not that I haven't made the effort. Perhaps you'll have better luck here. I do sincerely hope so.

Something Japanese

*"The mind wants to rest its reasons
against the framed snowstorm it keeps inside
the living room, caged in Zenith or something Japanese."
— Alice Fulton, "Silencer"*

Ssssh, don't wake her, napping over there
against the far frontier of her appetites.
Wildflowers pressed between the leaves of her book
have more presence than she, good as earth
to remember.

From life to afterlife is not tragic. Open
and spit, please. The form was as natural as my taste permitted.
Charts were immobile, not changing. I liked them all,
the sounds I made that day, good with figures, smart and tough,
a native to the land I walked upon.

Dismissive of her poetry, he found the fields
too wet for planting. In this hall where I am speaking to you,
you hear my voice, and together we confront the possibility
that poetry is radically different from all prose, that our borders
are leaky, that a little insecurity is good for us and for all living things.

A balthazar of champagne, *s'il vous plaît*.
Or didn't you hear me? I say, "Mango," and the word hangs in the air like a basket
of apples on a crisp November morning.

Take an egg, for example.
I offer you one. Just reach out now and take it. Your *sake* is almost warm.

Algerian with False Passport Arrested in Vermont

BURLINGTON, Vt. (Reuters) - A man believed to be an Algerian national, who tried to enter the United States with a falsified Canadian passport, knows full well that more than two miles beneath Antarctic ice lies an unfrozen lake, long sealed off, that within the ice cores drilled from just above it, scientists have discovered microbes expected to be arraigned later Tuesday in Vermont. He and the woman arrested with him know too that listening for extraterrestrial life has turned up only noise so far.

Their arrest in the midst of heightened security along the so-called digital divide, the low rate of Internet use among the poor and minority groups who allegedly attempted to smuggle explosives into the United States. The pair were arrested Sunday night as the moon approached perigee, the point in the orbit of a heavenly body, esp. the moon, or of an artificial satellite at which it is nearest to the earth. See diag. at apogee. "Video games have been a huge part of my life ever since I was exposed to them some years ago in Beecher Falls, Vermont, a small border post in the northeastern part of the state," U.S. Border Patrol Chief William Markson said in a telephone interview.

"We believe the man is an Algerian national and the woman is a Canadian," Markson said, citing recent findings that are turning botanical lore on its head by revealing that the great diversification of flowering plants took place at least 90 million years ago, earlier than previously suspected. He added that although no weapons or bomb-making equipment were found in the couple's car, the Fed, after bumping up interest rates three times this year to slow the economy, has decided now to leave rates unchanged and is touting the Charlotte Hornets as the most talented team in the East.

Markson declined to identify the pair, but said they would face charges of smuggling and possibly carrying falsified documents when they are arraigned in Burlington before a U.S. magistrate miffed that *Fantasia 2000*, the sequel to Disney's 1940 animated classic, may revive some of the arguments that its predecessor began, especially in remote areas along the US-Canadian border.

How to Live in the USA

To send mail, you must use stamps.

To use the phone:

Pick up the receiver

Listen for dial tone

Dial each number separately

Wait for person to answer after it rings

Speak.

Never put your hand in the garbage disposal.

Do not stand or squat on the toilet since it may break.

Always ask before picking your neighbor's flowers,
fruits or vegetables.

[Source text: a handbook published by the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, D.C., and made available in Vietnamese, Lao, Khmer, Cantonese, and Hmong (as quoted in *Civilization*, Aug./Sept. 1997)]

Obelisk

(after Borges)

1.

so much a part of the history the magnetized mountain
hypothetical plots mental states and sense impressions
systematically floating ideas hateful whitenesses
indisputable notions unanimous mouthings

2.

having died years before he is killed, his death reenacted
three wine glasses on the table gray beard, gray eyes
uncertain chronologies a revolver in his hand
dreams of a beating heart rhapsodic adventures

3.

a corner in the shade leaves hanging down by the wall
twilight told us something we should not have missed
his crowning years emanations of occult art no answers
to the riddles in his book vast forms and ciphers

4.

white, brave, innocent, cruel yet without disorder
submerged in pools, dark and deep diverse eternities,
their histories—aseptic and white courtyards
whose shapes and angles defied geometry

5.

forests and marshes regular and open spaces
above the still waters of a well five centuries of wonder
an ironing woman in the nearby town caught in the open
by a sudden downpour along a narrow, broken wall

[source text: Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths*]

After a Song by Ockeghem

"Malheur me bat"

strict meadows sang
along the edge of town

and over there among the willows
by the turgid stream

forgotten loves and hatreds
done beneath the sun

in air and light
your songs could make me wince

and children
living and dead
sing hectic songs
along the paths and trails

Homecoming

Say we return in half a thousand years
to find no streets or roads, but
everybody staying in the same place

never suspecting there is anywhere else to go.
Say we return and hear not one piece of music,
one sonata or symphony or opera, but

only one child humming "On the Trail."
Say we find no paintings or statues or books,
no radios, TVs or computers.

Say we say hello and no one hears us but
one bony man who fixes us with his one good eye
and lifts one finger to his silent lips in "Sshhh."

Soap

Elliot admits to Richard that he knows John Ramsey, the man responsible for his being in a wheelchair. He offers him the business

card of an attorney he knows and urges him to file a lawsuit against the cop. Martha and Carol run into Karen and Gabrielle at Cambridge Place. Brenda

and Holly run off together leaving the teens alone. When Cynthia starts making fun of Melanie, she stands up for herself. Meanwhile,

Traci and Carolyn grow closer, talking about children causing Nancy to consider telling her friend that Sherry is her daughter. Michaelene

shows Ken the photography award he has just won and suggests that they go out and celebrate his success. He's reluctant but finally comes around.

Daryl appeals to Irena and Malcolm to help him put a halt to Meredith's nuptials before she makes the biggest mistake of her life. At Westwind, Mark is delighted

when Charlotte asks him to play a crucial role in her upcoming wedding. Abby explains to Peter her theory that Evelyn was responsible for the murder of a British

diplomat years ago. Eileen tells Susan that despite Al's threats she will not stop searching for the daughter who was stolen from her at birth.

Sylvia becomes teary and upset while discussing Ina's case with Linda. Diane urges Lisa to consider all the possible consequences before

she goes looking for a grown child who probably has no idea that her birth mother even exists. Richard swears to Nancy he's dead certain that Sharon

still loves him and is only marrying Frank out of a sense of obligation. Finding Patrick having coffee at Ed's, Flavia invites him to join her at Virginia's

wedding but he turns her down. Bill makes Dionne Laurette realize finally that he's been behind all of her troubles in Palmdale recently and adds

that he's not even close to being done with her. Randall then demands that Pamela leave town with him or else Rodney and Pauline will suffer

the consequences from his boss. Jasper finds them arguing and tries to stop him. Theodora assures him that she's all right. Gene then stabs Frederick

out of Imogene's sight and again presses April to come with him. She refuses. Back at the wedding, Jeff tries to assure his guests that Penelope will be there

for the ceremony. Abner again thanks Malvena for giving her okay to start dating Hepzibah but Maria warns him that she doesn't approve of their being

together. On the flight back to Los Santos, Edith tries to encourage Alexandra not to give up on her marriage. She pushes her to call Ralph from the plane

but when she does so, there is no answer. As Otto tells Tyler what he learned in Florence, the phone rings. He decides not to answer it for fear that it may

be Janet. He then boasts to Travis that there is no way that he's going to allow Rebecca to take the baby back to Pamplona. Randall urges him not to blame himself.

Edward realizes that June was the only person who warned him about Eleanor's "secret." Dawn is disgusted to see Kirk at her beach house and

orders him to get out. He cries that she must listen to what he has to say. When she tries to pull him out the door, he finally shouts that his kissing Rick

was a set-up. Jonathan expresses concern to Sarah about a man who seems to be stalking him, then is taken aback when she reveals that Jeanine

is in Stella's employ. Adrienne continues to play dutiful wife after spending the night with Thomas. Kit vows to slap Celia with a restraining order after she

accosts him in the park. Later, Albert struggles to contain his rage when Jackie badmouths Betsy to his newest employee. Leslie frets about Grace avoiding

breakfast and urges the young woman to take better care of herself. Greg and Marnie quietly compare notes on their suspicions about the real reason Tex

is sticking so close to Lorraine. Kathryn bristles when Mordecai threatens to tell Miriam about the danger her granddaughter faces from Ivan.

Arlene and Billy have fun together making a surprise romantic dinner for Josephine and Max. Tim rocks Fran with the news that he's not interested in having

another child at this time. Lena is outraged when she finds Joan's pre-natal vitamins. She shows them to Clark and complains that her parents should have

known to use birth control. When Zach and Amanda come home and hear Mickey admit that he would use a condom if he ever had sex, Phil mistakenly assumes

that Deborah and Bart were about to make love. Hurt that he doesn't believe them, Marianne blurts out that Sandy is pregnant. After a frantic search around

the castle, Edmund finds Debby passed out in the garden. After he brings her inside, she comes to and is very drowsy as she admits that she loves him.

Traces of Speech

“a calling, an invocation, an appeal”

—Vicki Hearne

In tracking, it is only
in the dog’s answering
illuminations that you know
whether you have said

anything at all, or what
you have said, and if
the dog doesn’t answer,
then that is that,

for the moment at least,
for language.

*

A horse’s mouth is very clever, so
clever with the matter of locks on gates
that it is the rare horseman who has had no
occasion to be grateful

that we have ten fingers and they only one mouth. Hence
horses have continually to forgive us for what
must seem to them to be extraordinarily blunt and clumsy
communication, most of the time.

[source text: Vicki Hearne, “Tracking Dogs, Sensitive Horses
and the Traces of Speech” in *Adam’s Task*]

Prairie Dog Blues

Sing that song as if you know
it's all about the bastard

child raised by Farmer Brown
and his perfectly agrarian wife

their preoccupations being harsh
winters prairie solitude price supports

triple-A baseball and habits of mind
of a nation too used to having new

fields to clear and plough and plant
season after season after season,

from one horizon to the next
and then the next.

Gold, Frankenstein, and Mirth

1.

The drawing room was empty only a moment before, my anger had subsided
I took out my gold cigarette-lighter tapped the cigarette on the side of it
and then began to laugh I could still argue about it, I said, but I won't
how much longer is the slaughter to continue? his gesture made everyone jump

2.

With pleasure I fixed my eye on the bright moon a fan of branches
roused the embers a mist covered both the plain and the surrounding mountains
you've only got one pair of hands, silly daddy I spent nearly two hours
crossing the field of ice I couldn't see her face, but she had a long, slender neck

3.

He wasn't a patient man I smiled at the recollection the melancholy impression
I received from the objects around me she was very young and had a great deal of black hair
his pipe smelled unusually strong and acrid I was hurried away by fury
you really do need a drink, I said everything was silent, except the leaves of the trees

4.

In the adjacent room, someone was playing Mendelssohn's "Spring Song" on the violin
it was hard to keep the anger from my voice my hands from around
his scrawny neck you can't avoid it, but you have to avoid it the waters of the lake
were placid did this prognosticate peace or did it mock at my unhappiness?

5.

She gave me a cold, mirthless smile the door was half open and the light was on
she had sharp breasts under a ribbed jumper I jerked my hand away the pang was over, his
sufferings at an end forever come with me, to order the horses I hadn't felt so close to her
since we were first married you sliced me loose and said it was Creation

[source texts: Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein*; John Braine, *Room at the Top*;
Edward Field, "Frankenstein"; Margaret Atwood, "Speeches for Dr. Frankenstein"]

Thirteen Nouns of Verbing at a Noun

I

Among twenty snowy nouns,
The only verbing noun
Verb the noun of the noun.

II

I verb of three nouns,
Like a noun
In which there verb three nouns.

III

The noun verbed in the autumn nouns.
It verbed a small noun of the noun.

IV

A noun and a noun
Verb one.
A noun and a noun and a noun
Verb one.

V

I verb not verb which to verb,
The noun of nouns
Or the noun of nouns,
The noun verbing
Or just after.

VI

Nouns verbed the long noun
With barbaric noun.
The noun of the noun
verbed it, to and fro.
The noun
Verbed in the noun
An indecipherable noun.

VII

O thin nouns of Noun,
Why verb you verb golden nouns?
Verb you not verb how the noun
Verbs around the nouns
Of the nouns about you?

VIII

I verb noble nouns
And lucid, inescapable nouns;
But I verb, too,
That the noun is verbed
In what I verb.

IX

When the noun verbed out of noun,
It verbed the noun
Of one of many nouns.

X

At the noun of nouns
Verbing in a green noun,
Even the nouns of noun
Would verb out sharply.

XI

He verbed over Noun
In a glass noun.
Once, a noun verbed him,
In that he verbed
The noun of his noun
For nouns.

XII

The noun is verbing.
The noun must be verbing.

XIII

It verbed noun all noun.
It was verbing
And it was verbing to verb.
The noun verbed
In the nouns.

[source text: Wallace Stevens' "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird"]

Train

Down at the station I am struck
by a thought that carries
me along with it past downtown
exclamations along the order

of "Look at me!" and "Here am
I" and into seedy boroughs
of "No way!" streets and "Who you
lookin' at?" alleys. Then the green

of "I've got mine, Jack" suburbs
flashes by on the right, with river
sucked seaward on the left, until
the little towns—so quaint, so coy—

slide past. First, "Why me, O Lord?"
then "What have I done to deserve this?"
in quick succession; then, farther north,
in dairy country, a bite-sized town called "Huh?"

For an hour I brood between "Huh?"
and "Hmmm," where there's a longish
stop for fuel and water, and I
climb off and walk around for a while.

Back on board, I start taking
notes, jotting down this's
and that's about these's and those's.
I hear a conductor coming through

the car—voice powerful and deep—
announcing, "Next stop, Eureka!"
I snap to wakefulness, fully aware
now that I've had a doze—on the wrong

train, on the wrong coast, for any
sort of ultimate destination—
so at the next station, the one for Muddle
and Quandary, I grab my bags, get off, and am home.

Ocean Park

Faced with themselves, their mystifying,
ancient runes, some fuzz has worked its way
into their machinations, needle marks
so small we cannot see them.

Oscillating between the high and low impulses
that fuel their world, they reemerge after decades
of obscurity—quite a comeback for folks that are
now in their late sixties.

Little dulled with age but established
in ever more flamboyant venues, major figures
of our era, accumulations of nets, obliterate
all but their phoenix-like rebirth.

Worn terrains of woven fabrics undulate
on low wire pedestals. Would someone please
call a cab? I'd like to go home to think about that space
between your body and your clothes.

Baltimore: Moon Caught in Power Lines

“always a longing for mountains in me”

—Zoltan Kodaly

From our decks and rooftops here, the only mountains we see
are the ones on the moon. Backyards and gardens, garages
and row houses, a steeple or two, and far, far off,
between the trees and a couple lower, nearer buildings,
a high-rise office tower by the harbor—these, plus the moon

and the clouds and, in the bright city night, a star or two, are our vista.
No frogs here, but crickets and birds and barking dogs. Helicopters
and planes, including those high-up glittery ones too near the moon
to be heard. Sirens and other vehicular traffic on nearby streets. Sometimes
sounds of voices coming up from the sidewalk, especially on cool spring or fall nights

when the air-conditioners are turned off and the windows stand open.
The silent moon makes its way from one side of the house to the other,
sometimes waiting till breakfast time to plunge as far down
as the power lines, struggling to break free of their net on its way to
wherever it's going, mountains and all.

Nachtmusik

Carry no object until she stands
at the window holding a letter
where the light is perfect. Her audacity
doesn't matter.

You said it never rained here,
someone said. At evensong, a wind
came out of the dark
and the house was tidy
for people coming over.

A friend asks, What is the role
of darkness in an enlightened age?

Sometimes they even
love each other. One beach stood
at the margins of our field
of vision. I would have
liked to take a photo of her
in this light, so we devised words
to take the place of
imaginary beings. Do you think
you can stay for a nightcap?

Some nights we could almost
taste the blood, barbed wire in the trees
festooned with dancing lights.

Each time he took a shot
there was a little pop.

The salted meat would last them
through the winter.

Still, I'd like to stay up to see
midnight, make something clear,
once and for all.

Variations in C

1.

First we drain all color from the sky
and then we strip the sea of its shimmer.
Moist residues abound, but certain
excesses of modern life refuse to unzip us.

2.

First she blindfolds him with a silken scarf
and then she lifts one breast to his mouth.
Winged furies spring from the corners
of the room, duly advised of both duties and rights.

3.

First clip-on bow ties and then cravats.
Sumptuous repasts on deck, then, at sunset,
ashore. To show any muscle,
we must make it perfectly clear that that is that.

4.

Some like it deep and slow at first, but then
require more flash and spontaneity
in the perpetual adjustments of their shredded
documentations, their unfolded folds.

5.

First, lift yourself about three inches off the floor
without offending the others. Then slowly
show us what you've got. No abstract nouns,
please. Just flesh and fur will do the trick.

Coyote's Engines

A student asked Coyote, "What is the basis for emptiness?" and Coyote ran away laughing. He ran down the stairs, across wide verandas,

and found himself on a gravel driveway. He showed the promo film to all his friends, and then walked slowly on, until someone unknown to him

called out his name. It was one of those persons in-between, those half-breeds, as they're called. "I'm only stopping for one night," the half-breed said.

He jumped to his feet and began running—no, let's call it loping—along the shore. That put the conversation back on a more courtly footing. No more disco acrobatics,

or quick escapes in space shuttles. Six people sat on the long bench outside the store—three living, three almost. The child of one ran down the road like a little brown bullet.

On the last day of their voyage, she wrote to her parents, "I think I shall soon go mad." At every crossroads we came to, we radioed back our position. Their pistol fired

only clouds of smoke. The ragged female coyote would not rise to answer, nor did she ever return to their house after the evening's services had concluded.

Once again, the year left us behind, the darkness worn thin by her constant singing. Like mice, myrmidons of minor minions made their ways through walls

from strut to strut, resisting longitudinal compression. In Coyote's place, boys dress baggy, girls tight. "Head-to-toe black," the invitation

says, and gray won't get you past the wrestlers at the door.

[source texts: Stanislaw Lem, *Mortal Engines*, *Coyote's Journal*, unnumbered issue, ed. Jame Kollar, 1982; Jesse McKinley, "Meatpacking District: Slab of the Choicest Tenderloin," *New York Times*, 10/29/99]

Airs of Unconcern

1.

Spilled from the surface, analogous
to a certain confusion we'd often discussed,
we found it too nifty for words. Shade
oozed from the tree and spread itself
out upon the ground at our feet.
Craven sausages scolded themselves
for their misdeeds, although they hadn't
yet been formally indicted.

2.

Like many small bookshelves, this one
covered up a multitude of vices —
algorithms of invention,
periodic rapture, fleeting reminiscences
or facsimiles thereof.

3.

Was it today the world was to end?
Or was that yesterday?

4.

All that is true brings a blush to the cheek of all that is untrue.
My various jobs take me into all parts of town —
I wander the long avenues between
tradition and imagination.

Desperate endeavors move the entire epoch toward —
well, who knows what? A sandwich, perhaps? A burnt-out
light bulb? I wouldn't want to say. Would you?

Motorcade

Settling into his flannels, he must have aged
something inflamed, turned off the light
and went into arrears. Always these complications

changing an orderly, conscientious girl into a tall
young lady. Seeing a crumb or a stain
would have relieved her. Two men wheeling

the old woman into the tunnel, caps set at jaunty
angles. Trying to get the camera ready
in time to take a few quick snaps. His knees

rise to meet him as he pitches forward onto
the pavement, new sets of footsteps
arriving each minute. Precarious

notions indeed. Two blocks down
there's someone from Baltimore, listening,
taking notes. Somehow she managed

to play it by ear. Music boxes and silk flowers
set out there in front, in the center window.
Move along, please. We've got to give them

some room to get by. Tomorrow is somebody's
birthday, the whole town sleeping in
patterned, zippered cocoons.

Brunt

1.

Punch 7,568 details into your light-brown box and you're done. Lunch is just a swallow away. Downloads come around 2, and then there's a cup of tea, or maybe a slug of whatever's in that bottle in the brown paper bag in your bottom-right drawer.

2.

Review carefully the crafts we're trying to keep alive until we can do something about funding them on a more permanent basis, and then you will have time for a meeting or two, network or not (good time for a snooze). Schedule assassins for Friday.

3.

Time, place, and imagination come together around 5, just as you dash for the door, heltering and skeltering your way to your train or your bus. Hard as always to get taxis in the rain. Public transport full as ever of transcendently pragmatic folk.

4.

None of them speak, none menace. Our ability to divide has never been questioned or called into scruple. Key elements of our mental world parlay into partisan ambush. We can clearly see where we fit on the trenchant curve of the public's opinion.

How to Tell Poets from Other Mammals

1.

Poets all have hair, rather than feathers or scales. But when one reads that the side walls of their noses contain a spongy erectile tissue that leads to nasal enlargement and nostril expansion by vaso-congestion during sexual arousal, one begins to wonder.

2.

Poets have rounded outlines. But any body relationship they feel should be grist to their sexual mill, and because they are an inventive species it would be natural for them to experiment with any postures they like—the more the better, in fact, because this will increase the complexity of the sexual act, increase sexual novelty, and prevent sexual boredom between the members of long-mated poet pairs.

3.

Poets have flat faces, but virtually all the sexual signals and erogenous zones are on the front of their bodies—the facial expressions, the lips, the beards, the nipples, the areolar signals, the breasts of the females, the pubic hair, the genitals themselves, the major blushing areas, and the major sexual flush zones.

4.

Poets have varied facial expressions, but these are often unseen by partners, as the typical mating posture of poets involves the rear approach of the male to the female. She lifts her rear end and directs it toward the male. Her genital region is visually presented backwards to him. He sees it, moves toward her, and mounts her from behind. There is no frontal body contact during copulation, the male's genital region being pressed firmly to the female's rump region.

5.

Poets can “manipulate” objects. They attack small objects, shake large ones, spit and spew, and try they try to bite, scratch or strike anything in reach. In younger poets these activities are rather random and uncoordinated. Their crying indicates that fear

is still present. The aggression has not yet matured to the point of a pure attack: this will come much later when the poet is sure of itself and fully aware of its physical capacities. When it does develop, it has its own special facial signals. These consist of a tight-lipped glare. The lips are pursed into a hard line, with the mouth-corners held forward rather than pulled back. The eyes stare fixedly at the audience and the eyebrows are lowered in a frown. The fists are clenched. The poet has begun to assert itself.

[source text: Desmond Morris, *The Naked Ape*]

Samovar

1.

say what you like, there will be trouble Anyuta was there in her hat,
wearing a dark veil he'd place the boots back in the front hall again and set
off in his bare feet dirt-cheap rotten leather nervous, irritable
downtrodden people a tangled state of affairs

2.

we began our life together consulting about something beside them, I too
felt like a cart-horse fascinated by everything she did an insignificant
worm of this world poverty had taken root and become our local style
maintaining the proper decorum all nature, hidden in a transparent haze

3.

I asked them only for a cup of tea the samovar, they said, was cold
a sow and her brood rooted in a pile of garbage Anyuta in her low-necked dress
approached the table and began to sing only the girls in this place had the fresh
air of moral purity I got so potted all I could do was laugh

4.

his eyes smarted the wind made a wild, inhuman music still a child,
he knew how to sacrifice for his family the rain led to bronchitis
bronchitis kept him from working what to do with a wife who would
not play the piano drinking tea and arguing alike as two drops of water

5.

impatiently waiting for his death amazed to see him up and about again
carrying on as always in a street full of shops, a bucket of slops
thrown upon me, perhaps by accident if the blind lead the blind
both fall into the ditch "nothing passes away," says the inscription

[collage source: Chekhov, various stories]

Phantasmagoria

1.

The haunted bathtubs of suburbia,
on their last legs. Fourteen brothers, all
the same age, sharing the same office.

2.

Unslapped figs somehow taste
better, she thought, moving from sentence
to sentence through the most

3.

Extravagant permutations. The trees'
branches, unashamed yet
reticent.

The Vanity of Purely Random Taxis

She came upon a sudden expectation that at every corner there would be taxis, their drivers looking to her expectantly, waving her in. And she would nod “No” in a smiling sort of way, knowing that it wouldn’t be far to the next corner.

And so, for the first time in her life, she really took to walking, sauntering even, along the avenues and crosstown streets, taking her time at the windows of stores, stepping, once in a while, inside—to jot down a price or try something on.

Halfway down a canyon between the avenues, she dropped in to a coffee shop (something classical on the Muzak), found a server attentive to her wish for a small cappuccino. A half hour later, she paid and departed, finding a taxi just outside

the door, waiting—as though she might want or need it. Her walk home was a pleasure, knowing that, at any moment, she could step into a cab. From her window, she saw them circling down below. And she soon drifted off to sleep, lulled by their gentle, yellow honking.

Mosque

"Aziz had a wild desire to make an enemy for life."

— E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*

1.

Song of an unknown bird the river no longer sacred here in every remark, a meaning
ladies treated like men the high places of Dravidia flesh of the sun's flesh
a glimpse of them makes the breath catch flowing from the foot of Vishnu and through
Siva's hair older than anything in the world re-entering the curve of earth

2.

The heat had leapt forward hand touching hand, the animal thrill not to be frightened,
the height of folly everyone cross or wretched if you can't see, you can't see
tranquillity swallowed everything up a rock resembling an inverted saucer thick hair, fine
skin she felt a bit dashed the house came in sight a pebble thrown by a child

3.

A friendliness as of dwarves shaking hands an infinite goal behind the stars
people not really dead until they are felt to be dead kindness and more kindness and kindness
again once more he was unable to desert her "Are you mad?" "Give me time
to consider" the wreckage of her silly attempt to see India

4.

The grim untidy plain, the white shrines, the shallow graves deeper thoughts about breakfast
you keep your religion, I mine things he had shown to no one content to help people
and like them hot weather approaching an accident, but no one hurt
everything out of proportion a low embankment between dull fields

5.

Friends again, aware they could meet no more the floods had abated he did not travel
as lightly as in the past no more nonsense or bitterness round white clouds in the sky,
white pools on the earth all the way back to Mau they wrangled about politics
waddling in at this hour to take her seat an awful rage danced this way and that

[collage source: E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*]

Reckless Talk for a Girl on the Lam

1.

I should have known better. Her forehead crinkled, her mouth stretched in the tragic rectangle. I picked up an LA newspaper and there was a headline about his murder. I said, "Is it true?" She said, "What do you think?"

2.

Her knee nudged mine. He waved his hand in front of his face, as if a buzzing fly had invaded his mouth. The pool was abandoned now, but wavelets still washed the sides. Needing a drink more than ever, I thanked her. She rolled her eyes to the sky.

3.

I realized with some embarrassment that the body on the deck was me. I climbed air down to it and crawled back in. There were barracuda in the pool, hungry for my manhood. I climbed out. The movie ended in a chaste embrace. He looked at me in genuine shock.

4.

Feet were busy on the floor over my head. "So you're an altruist, are you?" he said, with the bitter irony of age. I didn't answer for a minute. She pretended to be innocent, and wormed her way into my good graces. A new cardboard FOR SALE sign was wired to the gate.

5.

"That was quite a performance," I said. He got in and drove away. I didn't follow him. The Taos Shop was a little tourist trap on the Coast Highway. The siren's whoop was louder. I would leave the ballistics experts to do the rest. I never could tell one Hollywood blonde from another.

[collage source: Ross Macdonald, *The Barbarous Coast*]

ATM in Lobby

*"Lobby Girl sits on the fat man's knee-e,
fat man happy as he can be-e."*

He picked up the heavy lamp from the table and began to explore the hips tight with her leg, his genuine and less guilty wealth. Shampooing her lips, swimming and casting round his eye to delve with some companions what men began to loosen.

Her vagina clamped down upon his cock, and he sends Eurylochus to explore, to feel it pulsate to her body, shimmer into a herald of new dreaming. We think we cannot, so then we must investigate this as she became lost in the throes of her orgasm. This struck dead their hearts,

the end of this counsel being to persuade his soldiers he had actually done it with a woman. Those parts which he knew would prove a most, to them, unpleasing motion, to take his cock with her hands and close her mouth about the head, and therefore I advise thee to explore.

I now am bound, in purpose, to seek by this device of travel to slowly tighten on it, sucking it until she had about half of it in her mouth, to earn by her deep explorings, to satiate him, sucking on it like a popsicle, eyes glued to mine, savoring my every reaction.

And thoughts of sacred Sparta, up and down the coastline of my straining cock, of our land, its cultivation of the soil and of the mind, exploring the interior regions of her mouth, preparing by scientific means problems that will unite us instead of belaboring those problems which invoke the wonders

of science instead of its terrors. Together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap the ocean until finally all of my cock was buried in her mouth. As we plumb the vastnesses of space, let us go to the new worlds together. She ground

her face against my stomach ere I could explore its wildernesses. All forms and substances twisting her head back and forth, then returning to fucking my cock with her mouth. At Oxford, I found the liberty and seclusion best fitted for my active and exploring mind.

No safer place than college for a youth whose mind wasn't going to take anything too roundly. Nothing in my previous experience had prepared me for the great daring and venture of sailors on new voyages of discovery. I could feel my balls swelling, getting ready to expel my fluids.

Reckless, O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me.

Halvard Johnson by Halvard Johnson

1. My Poetry

The only thing there is to say about my poems is that they are never blurry! I've always written poems, even when I was a kid in knickers. Poetry fascinates me and, in addition, lets me almost live the way I want to live. I don't consider myself a bard of the consumer society, but I work in a capitalistic system. I don't claim to produce art either. I've never worked on commission and I'll keep on with that. With one slight difference: over the last 40 years I've always worked for colleges or universities, but soon I'll be free to write poems and not teach for a living. That way there's no line between my personal work and what I do for a living. I don't stash my poems away in drawers under the socks. On the contrary, I try to show them to anyone and everyone the whole world over. All I can say is that I have full control over my work. I call it making the system work for you. The people who use me have more money than I'll ever see. They are rich—they are public and private institutions, successful magazines and journals. I don't feel sorry for them. But I also work for free—or more or less for free—most of the time. And it's just as much fun. I can do poems for magazines put out by young people who don't have enough money to pay the people who work for them. If they're doing something I think is interesting, and if I think I can help them out, then I do it for nothing.

2. My Training

I do a lot of portrait poems, which, like my love poems stem from fashion poetry, since I've always been a fashion poet. In the beginning, I wanted to be a full professor and travel around the world, but it didn't work out that way. When I was 18, I was in Singapore and flat broke. The *Singapore Straight Times*—it's still being published—offered me a job as a poet. I had a beat-up Smith-Corona, but every time there was something to write a poem about, I got there too late. After two weeks they fired me, and for a long time I didn't have any money. My inspiration also comes partly from news poems. I really admire newspaper poets.

In my opinion, news is an exciting field for a poet. I've studied the work of the paparazzi poets very closely. For me, their poems are very powerful. I think that poetry has been made too intellectual. Especially by beginners, or those who study poetry but don't dare push the button.

3. The Subject

Q: As a poet, you are an anti-formalist. Your reaction to fine arts implies that poetry must, first and foremost, be the uniqueness of a look at a subject and not only at the form in which the subject is arranged.

A: Absolutely. The subject — that's the big question. That's what I'm interested in.

Q: How do you work up a poem?

A: It's a long process. Something no one knows about is that I do all of my work in crayon first. I always carry around a little notebook in which I can jot down the minutest details concerning poems that I'll write some other time. I can't type. So I scribble down handwritten notes on props, lighting, the compositional parts of my poem. Perspiration under the arms, puffed-up lips, a kiss, a man's shoulder, a woman's hand, the inside of the elbow, the interplay of muscles, of vowels and consonants, a man and woman naked to the waist, a man.

4. The Message

There is no message in my poems. They are quite simple and don't need any explanation. If by chance they seem a little complex or if you need a while to understand them, it's simply because they are full of details and that a lot of things are happening. But usually they are very simple.

5. Drafting a Poem

It's the drafting I'm interested in. I also enjoy writing at night, for the simple reason that people can see through my window that I am writing. To be seen: I'm fascinated by that. Every poet has his obsession, and that's mine. I'm used to using everything around me. When I write a poem about diamonds, for example—and I like writing about them on a beach in sunlight—I always have trouble with the insurance companies. They don't want you to take

a step without a bodyguard. When I look at these poems, the hardest part was conveying the notion that these men were armed. The woman, the diamonds—they were easy. But I didn't want the bodyguards to notice that they were being put in the poem. Like a lot of poets, I am also fascinated by store-window mannequins. I like to lead the reader on a wild goose chase. Often the women in my poems seem like mannequins and the mannequins seem like humans. The mix-up amuses me, and I like to play on that ambiguity in my poems. Another one of my obsessions is swimming pools. When I was a boy, I competed in sports a lot. I love water, it fascinates me like swimming pools fascinate me, especially the ones in big cities.

6. A Special World

The world I write poems about is very particular: there are always, or almost always, the same kind of characters. There are always women, women who are apparently rich. I write poems about the upper class because I'm well acquainted with it. And when someone asks me why I never show the other side of the coin, I reply that I don't really know much about it, but that there are other poets who can do a marvelous job. I prefer to stick to what I know. If I wrote a poem about women in a poverty-stricken setting, it would be completely false. People have said that my poems have nothing at all to do with reality. That's not true: everything is based on reality.

7. Women

I don't work very much in my study because I think that a woman I'm writing about cannot come to life in front of a wall of books. I want to write about how a woman of a certain milieu lives, the kind of car she drives, her setting, what kind of men she sees. It doesn't matter where they come from — New York, Paris, Nice, Monte Carlo. Their nationality doesn't matter either. The women of a certain milieu, no matter where they're from, all look and dress alike. I am very impressed when I travel from one continent to another, from Paris to Beverly Hills; the women can't possibly resemble each other, but their clothes and makeup are always the same. It's a sign of the consumer society. You can buy a Saint Laurent anywhere in the world. I wanted to show in my poems the rules of a certain society. It's just bringing out into the open certain types of behavior.

8. Provocation

Q: What does the desire to provoke that so often underlies your work mean?

A: I like and look for reactions. I don't like kindness or gentleness. I want to provoke, but not by choice of subject, although I do need certain subjects in order to create new poetic effects, and especially to find new rhythmic tension that the choice of these subjects allows me. If I drown a woman in props, or if I juxtapose her to a signpost, if I contrast nudity, say, with clothing, if I ask her to wear a black bra under a light-colored blouse while I'm writing about her, I obtain or I'm looking for new interactions of tension which seem at first surprising but are then accepted. The only provocation I hate is that of the surrealist image. It has no place in my world.

9. Vulgarity

Q: A certain number of poems have been published under your name that are not without some vulgarity. How do you react to that?

A: I totally believe in these books of mine. I love vulgarity. I am very attracted by bad taste—it is a lot more exciting than that supposed good taste which is nothing more than a standardized way of looking at things. I am proud of a poetry collection like *Sleepless Sluts*. A little less of *Secret Channels*, which was incredibly successful. I don't write poetry for myself, not for art. If the poetry world rejects me, all I can say is, "Good luck to the world of poetry." If I look for a real point of view, I'm not going to start by looking at what my critics will accept so I can conform to that. That's why in *Sleepless Sluts* all that sadomasochism still seems interesting to me today. I always carry chains and padlocks in my car trunk, not for me but for my poems—and by the way, I never make the knots real tight.

[after: "Helmut Newton by Helmut Newton" in *Helmut Newton* (New York: Pantheon Press, 1987)]