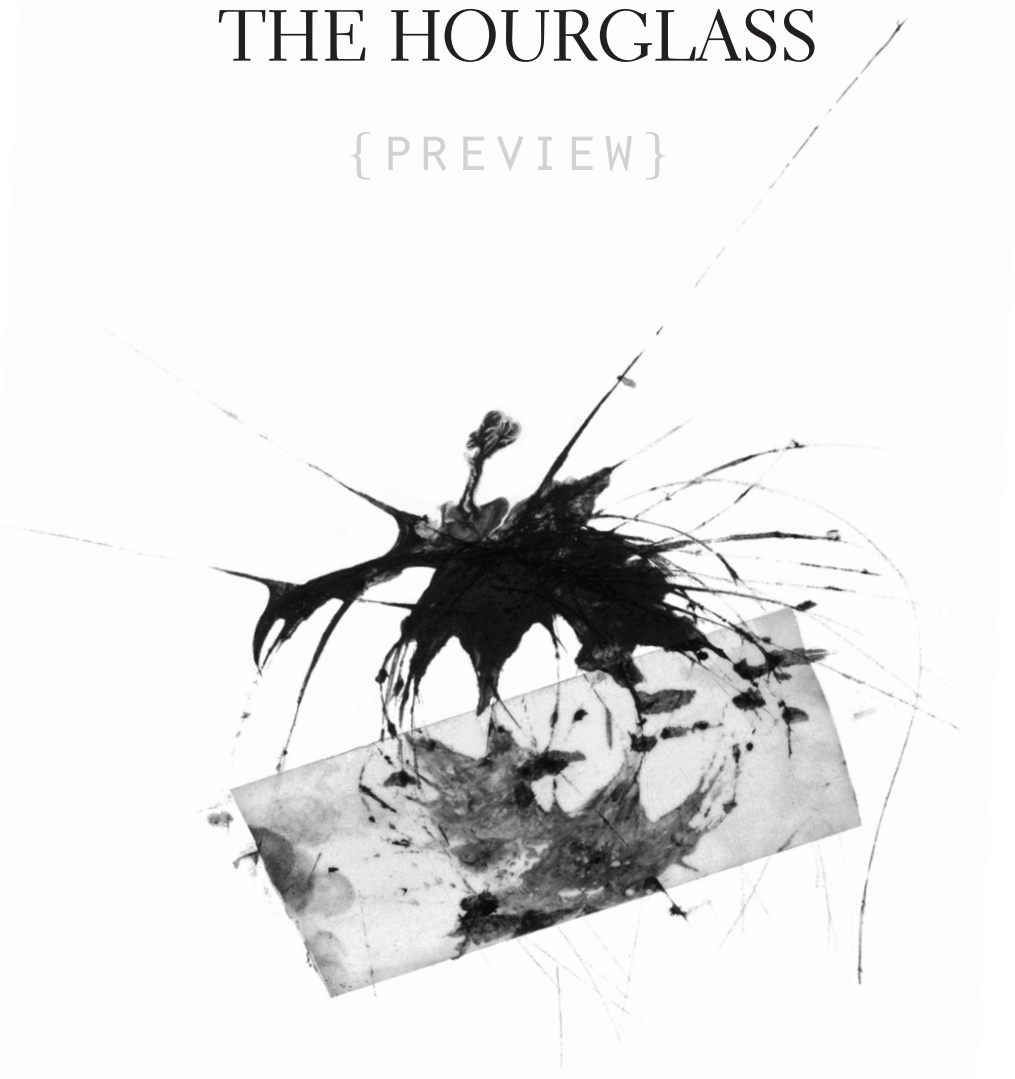


THE VOLCANO THE TORNADO & THE HOURGLASS

{ PREVIEW }



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THE VOLCANO
THE TORNADO
&
THE HOURGLASS

ADRIEN CASEY

IF A BREAST IS THE ARK

6,500,000,000,000

In view of the fact that human consciousness is divided between the desire to serve the deity and the impulse toward disobedience, it is only logical that the God in whose image we are said to be made would be equally paradoxical.

— JANET O. DALLETT

[...] And at length they pronounc'd that the Gods had order'd such things. Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast.

— WILLIAM BLAKE



Until the kings become philosophers, or else the philosophers kings, civilizations will exist in a state of tumult.

— MARCUS AURELIUS

INTRODUCTION



Right. Waking up and crossing the room & tripping over my shoes in the process, I literally stumbled upon the fact that I was still drunk.

And I can't say it didn't hurt more than a little. I undid the blinds to let in some light to survey the damage: pain for certain—but, luckily, nothing major. A minor scrape and perhaps a bruise to come; the not-yet-fully-dissipated numbness of sleep remained, however, on my side. What boded less well was a stack of books, now no longer stacked: pages of some postmodernist writings and pages of some writings on the Buddha went jammed into each other, playing cards mid-shuffle, like. It also seemed that I damaged my friend's *Contemporary Cultural Studies Reader*, the cover of which opened and bent violently upon *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right*, which now had a creased one, too. Three foreign (five-dollars' worth of, if I recall) Cézanne postcards tucked into & exceeding the boundaries of a souvenir copy of the Constitution were likely as bent as the little booklet itself. All of this for the love of alcohol. Then I realized I was bleeding. Muttering neologized curse words with a slight smile (the situation's humor had to be admitted, if only by imagining it seen from an outsider's perspective), I looked outside of the window to see if I'd been seen by a neighbor in the apartment across the way.

[*This short interjection is one of the few of its kind in this book. It aims only to ensure that any reading of what's written above has noted: the current "mode" of Western culture; a major*

religion of Eastern origin (that doesn't necessarily require belief, only understanding & practice— and hence, which needn't be accessed as a religion); culture itself & culture's looking at itself; the cultural/ social feminine; art; the United States and politics; & love. There's furthermore the notion of evolution into the five-fold, the idea of quintessence. And yet also at this key moment of incipient narrative onset: another symbol softly lands upon another symbol, looking the protagonist straight in the eyes...]

As suddenly as it was strangely, a small brown dove landed upon the windowsill, and looked me straight in the eyes. Seemingly querying my stupor. The appearance of which was probably doubled due to my only half-opened eyes, which'd yet to be reconciled with the full light of day. Its perfectly round eyes, round, large, and black, were entirely of the fathomless depth that, with persons, is found only in the center.

It was extremely interesting, looking at this bird looking at me, and me just looking at this bird. Rather especially surreal given that it was my first intentional activity of the day, and— I'd almost forgot, until I again felt— the whole time I lightly bled from the hand. And to my dismay: upon my favorite shoes, no less. *Fucking shit*, I noted in thought. As I took note of my situation, the bird moved its head, surveying what I surveyed, and in fact seemed to simultaneously take note of what I was taking note of, too. All very pleasantly curious, to say the least. Communication with animals, and all. By this token, it was also endearing for an unspoken reason: having established a kind of spontaneous, wordless rapport with the dove— though bleeding the whole time and still bleeding— I didn't want to just run off without somehow explaining to the bird *why* I had to be so soon in parting. And yet: with but the very thought of wishing to explain my need of leaving the room in order to tend to my wound: the dove ascended, up from the sill & into the air, having understood perfectly.

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A BOOK OF NONFICTION & FICTION IN 156 PIECES

Like when I used to go up on my roof and look over to Brooklyn, over all of the buildings and a river, at her sleeping.

I'd do this late, after we'd talked on the phone for awhile & said our goodnights and I knew she was sleeping. It felt better going up and looking; alive & with purpose, secure. Somehow in a glance taking in proof of thousands of lives— lit windows, airplane lights, traffic headlights & taillights, etc.— and having the imagined image of her nestled somewhere within it— more made sense, could be loved.

But the broken heart, and how it collapses: I shall liken it to a dead star, the result of which is a vacuum, consuming indiscriminately everything and all without even a superstring-sized shred of logic whatsoever at all. This has me feeling worn and getting told I look worn— weight gained and facial expression lost. How it is that the cost of resignation to life is typically higher than when one stays engaged in the game: the alcohol, the cigarettes, the non-nutritional food: it all adds up, exacts its toll; body & wallet both.

The word *pleasant*. How it floats (as if either on air or upon water). Pleasant is best understood by how what's around it moves, the air or the water— picture a balloon, say. By contrast, *excited* or *depressed* are words the feeling of which comes directly from the subject. An excited or depressed person exudes the mood; a pleasant person is more carried aloft by it. (So, when things are pleasant, two peoples' lives move together because that's simply what they do, no one really having to try.)

Love is the knowing of when to put her photograph into your wallet & the how and when of taking it out. Presently, this is how I opt to define love.

There was very little writing of love while we dated, but now that we don't there's been a fair bit. I think of Goethe and *Werther*, and some other authors and books, and it occurs to me that much of the better writing on love is written in love's absence. (Certainly, such is often the case with songs.) Of course, this also makes sense: if only because it's generally impossible to know the full nature of something when you're living right inside of it— one of life's paradoxes, I suppose.

[As I reread these pages and assemble this book, it dawns on me now, fully in the manner of epiphany, that: as it is with writing & love, so it is with writing & democracy.]

2 | FEBRUARY 15, 2003

On the north sidewalk of 24th Street between 5th & 6th, detained by the police, there are several hundred of us standing together within barricades and against a wall.

A group of traffic police led us down the street, detaching us from the rest of the march to the UN, saying it was a detour. Traffic reasons, I supposed. We obliged with little option. And as we approached the other end of the street: they blocked it off. It was all very unexpected, and then other police suddenly came out from around the corner. Before we knew what was going on, they then barricaded the end whence we came, as well. There were officers on horses, motorcycles. On foot and inside of vehicles. They forced us all to the sidewalk— largely under some scaffolding— pushing us close together as they erected a third and final barricade. It didn't take us long to understand, however with surprise: that they'd corralled us, that we were corralled. Several hundred of us, now cut off from the thousands of others en route to the UN.

But our detention was only the first surprise, and perhaps not as shocking as the second: a police officer with a camera stepped from & climbed atop a special operations van. Then there appeared other officers with cameras. Still cameras and video cameras: they had confined us so as to better photograph us, to have a more precise inventory of our images for the purpose of keeping police records.

We, against the war— and therefore: to be photographed by the police. Basically, to be assured: that when you have a dissenting opinion, we'll be watching, documenting.

And they were clever: they waited twenty or thirty minutes before taking their pictures and video: thereby allowing the protest leaders & the most vociferous to filter to the corral's edges. For a time, they even released (in single-file lines of five or six) the front-most & loudest of the protesters: so as to videotape & photograph them singly as they walked away.

For most of the hour of our detainment in which our right to peaceful protest was unabashedly violated, I simply stood stunned by my new understanding of things. The most disturbing part is what I best remember: my friend Andy being released from the corral in one of the single-file lines: just the image of him walking about 100 feet to 6th Ave, during which time several officers with still & video cameras recorded his image.

I imagine those headshot images — and my own in a crowd photograph — lying in manila folders somewhere in some NYPD filing cabinet. Yet it was the police who broke the law that day — against their own beliefs, some of them probably — not us. There's no reason for those photos to exist.

3

Some problems appear only with proximity, like those little clouds of tiny insects in summer air. Also the smell in one's nose that is the smell of sickness. The scent of absence, vacuity; the absence of one's own health, the space thereby left, perhaps; it's a sort of

pallid translucency that marks the onset of sickness. Into a folded Kleenex doth lands the Rorschach blotch of my sneeze.

And that the water of the first shower of the day in the building is heard from behind its walls. There're no roosters in cities, just alarm clocks, traffic, and building water's sound. I don't need something to wake me. Really, I just need something to mark the time, preferably smoothly. I like the sound of the water, prefer it to other sounds.

4

Yet the city can take on terrifying proportions, especially Saturday and Sunday mornings when couples walk hand in hand or arm in arm, their bed sheets still dragging at their ankles for people the likes of me to trip upon. It's not simply accepting that she's off, but also (or, more) accepting that, on any given morning, she and some he have bed sheets which trail behind.

Turning off your cellphone to ensure the silence is just a method of taking control of silence, rather than being its victim.

There's a sort of unsteady descent, the full nature of which is beyond my understanding, but the weight of which is certainly felt daily. And a view outside won't always tell anything— one's stared-at reflection upon an elevator's mirrored walls, the unchanging & seamless cloudwhite beyond an airplane window— yet the sense of falling is an internal one.

5

That chance should play such a large role in human life should be of no surprise at all, insofar as it's the nature of Earth itself. To be sure, it is only by chance that our Earth happens to be the perfect, conducive-to-life distance from the sun, and that the entire sequence of events having resulted in our having water, soil, & an atmosphere was ever able to occur in the first place.

Chance is pretty much how and why we were born, and is oftentimes how we grow & get by. This isn't to snub the value of intention; it's just to say that chance & intention are two sides of the same coin. The very fact of Earth is a record of the conception, survival, ascendancy, and continuity of the mathematically

almost-impossibly-unlikely. (In essence, causality is the (obsessive-compulsive) desire to see what came before what *is*. It is the need to know *why*— and as such, is restless. *It assumes that the world is like humans; however, humans are like the world*— which remains an incredibly unknown place.)

§

I am the outcome of the coming together of variables beyond my control. My parents' conception & birth of me, my earliest influences & education: I had no control over. Quite plainly I am, in effect, chance incarnate. With this being the case, it's somewhat illogical to disregard chance, insofar as it's illogical to disregard one's own history.

And while as an adult I now make most all choices about my life, I cannot fully control the things that happen to me, things I witness and am introduced to.

6

Perspicacity comes in waves, and so has its undertow.

Aspects of the intellectual life sometimes remind me of those specialized, rounded tops (invented by someone who must know a fair bit of math): the ones that spin & spin until turning themselves upside down, and then continue to spin upside down upon their stems for awhile longer yet, until at last collapsing upon their sides.

The Thinker was concealing a boner.

7

Earlier, I was thinking of how a human lifetime is a substantial period of time, as it means (if we assume a lifetime to be 70 years) that a lifetime is 1/29th of all AD years that have passed into existence in the past 2008 years ($2008 \div 70 = 28.685714$).

The thought brought the following image to mind: of myself at the beginning of a line of 30 people, and looking back— just fifty feet or so— to the 30th person: at a someone who lived in BC times; before the time of Jesus Christ.

· · ·

As regards the perennially vague & eternally pertinent question of “the meaning of life”: one has a lifetime to answer the question, or answer to it. And the time frame may seem like a lot. But when one sees that a lifetime is only as long as a lifespan, one comes closer to understanding just how short it all really is.

8 | MISTA ANT & THE DINOSAUR (MISTA ANT’S DEBUT)

Mista Ant looked up from his anthill and saw a woman in a red velvet dress leaning out & looking down from an apartment window high above. He then went down into the Earth, to a depth equidistant to her height, where laid the bones of dinosaurs. Would these bones ever be discovered by humankind, Mista Ant did not know. He tunneled to the jaw — a *Tyrannosaurus rex*, it was. *What were dinosaurs!* Mista Ant knew & did not. What were people. He and they themselves scarcely knew.

He tunneled to the jaw, and stood there looking from betwixt the dead & gaping jaws of its still-manifest & many-toothed ferocity. Then he turned & looked straight back the length of the tunnel to the woman in the apartment. What did she know. *What* did she know. What did *she* know. What *did* she know. What did she *know*. In his head, Mista Ant shifted the emphasis of the words of his thought, to see how or if this affected it, whether it offered any answers.

9

Upon seeing either a young child or a shooting star, my immediate response is to smile — I don’t know when this started; it hasn’t always been the case. It feels like a smile of recognition — though I can’t fully explain this. (In Egyptian, “priest” means “star watcher” — I learned this at the Royal Observatory in England, standing at the prime meridian of the world.) To find beauty is to agree with, insofar as seeing can be understood as a kind of thinking.

10

You feel the rain. And looking up at the clouds it’s impossible to decipher where the rain comes out of. When love is lost it is often impossible to determine where it left out of — you just feel it.

I just found a piece of Amber's hair on me. How can one throw such a thing out?

But one can.

Time on the hands. Cock there, too.

11

Do I seem to need to understand the mechanics of life to engage in life? Yet this—if I'm to engage in life's full spectrum— isn't possible.

Things've always made more sense by the sea. The endlessly watchable surface of water makes sense because the eyes, like any other part of our body, like it when caressed. The same body of water can range from placid to violent in mere moments: but water's tendency is towards placidity. And what's underwater has a logic all of its own, related to but differentiated from ours: beneath this surface it's simply another world. Sea animals travel in all directions and don't have to look like anything, simply assuming whatever form they do. Jellyfish. Clams and other mollusks, which die into varying seashells. Starfish (if you hold a living one, it's stunning watching the vast, synchronized movements of its underside). (Actually, that whole BBC series *The Blue Planet* is fucking amazing, nuff said.)

People have died in the sea. I wonder about the very first drowning, the first time a human head went under and didn't resurface— I know there must've been witnesses on the shore, who saw. And upon seeing, then felt, then waited... until they knew, and felt again, you know.

12 | IN WHICH THE AUTHOR MAKES A CUP OF TEA

I make a cup of Irish breakfast tea, taking its paper envelope back to my desk, and then start cutting out the letters with an x-acto, until each of the seventeen letters in "Irish breakfast tea" is unto itself. Then I push them about.

It's fun pushing letters about, discovering new words from old. (!!) Of late there's been the incipient

sense of an inner cyclone, like in autumn when on sidewalks there's that small dance of leaves, their timorous hesitancy, that little dance of leaves prefiguring the spiral prefiguring the scattering. It's— everything's— !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!?!!?!!?!!?!!!!!! . *Just the nature of this distance felt from myself, terrifyingly simultaneously ethereal & tangible*: a distance like looking up through space to the stars, or down Niagara Falls to the bottom, at the river there below again. Having such a distance within oneself, and only being able to see yourself as being across it, at the other side, a place to be reached.

After a short period of time transposing, the incomplete sentence *If a breast is the ark* stares up at me; a question posed to myself, to smile over. (!) Yes.

I fetch an index card & some glue to preserve the love. Upon the reverse, I write the current population of the world, *six billion five hundred fucking million...*

13

Two definitions I recently heard and liked: *crisis: when material progress moves ahead of understanding*; and, *culture: what you grow in a petri dish*.

Quite possibly the future of humanity necessarily entails the rejection of culture as we know it. Hand in hand with this: is the principle of how nothing lasts as long as its aftereffects. As well as: how it happens that in creating (or allowing) conditions favorable to growth, one generally must create (or allow) the very conditions one is traditionally of an unfavorable opinion towards. Or, at the least: conditions one is uncomfortable with.

14

I watch the city begin disappearing, in waning degrees of opacity, a fog setting upon and throughout the city, taking also the nightclouds from sight. Tens of thousands of lives vanished under an unknown weight of suspended water; were it all condensed into a tank, its weight would be tons. Molecules innumerable,

and all having cycled through space billions of years prior to the beginning of recorded time— they’ve passed through the blood of dinosaurs, and more recently through beer bottles, and most recently pissed from my bladder; and all this after having come from the oceans & seas, rivers, clouds, and all of the other places where water resides. Now: these molecules comprise a clod of steel wool rubbing away the definition from all of Manhattan’s many hard edges; tonight, they make for a more livable vision, particularly so with so many softened lights illuminated from within it.

The clock on the ConEdison building turns. The city’s all but disappeared within the fog. Brooklyn’s already very far gone, and I decide to take comfort in thinking of how it’s somewhat paradoxical— if only in language *language: my fail-safe; my home of homes*— that everything evaporates in all of the moisture.

15 | THE WHISTLING RIVER

This evening, the river whistles to me. Cold, windy, deserted, and the Charles River is here freezing over. The ice slowly grows into the river’s middle, though is largely fractured most everywhere— so there’re hundreds of smaller pieces, all spaced inches (or less) from one another. As the river moves, the edges of all of the pieces undulate with the current, rubbing against one another in unison. And then there’s the wind blowing over them all, with their shifting heights, per the current’s movement. Very occasionally a gigantic air bubble slips from underneath the ice.

The sound of the wind across the undulating ice, coupled with the bellowy-squeak sound of ice-against-ice & the now-and-again balwooop-sound of an air bubble escaping: makes for the eeriest, most entrancing & vast & barren & ultimately-futile-to-attempt-to-describe soundscape: and so I just stood there listening, must’ve stood there for twenty minutes, freezing.

What would a primitive man think? That the gods were speaking to him? Would he read into it all some kind of a sign? He doesn’t know what I know, my having a bit of knowledge about the natural

sciences, as well as enough of a scientific mind to understand exactly how, causally, this sound has been made.

Yet a scientific man also misses the point if, in his experience of such an occurrence, all he does is think to himself how, by nature's laws, such an occurrence occurs. Should all he do be to rationalize the experience, he fails to feel the fullness of what the occurrence offers: and thus misses the fuller point...? For humankind must better merge both analytical understanding & the wonder of the primitive* — *wonder* being the critical term here, insofar as the sense of wonder is the foundation for our connection to the world.

16

So I called her anyway, not necessarily against my better judgment, but perhaps against the grain, as can happen with feelings coming out of the woodwork again. Hung up at her voicemail. Just as well: we can't talk; the conversation would be the mutually unpleasurable process of my putting words into her mouth. What of this desire? To put words into the face before you, where you once had but no longer have your lips? I'd end up wanting to slam down the phone, but you can't even do that these days: in the electronic age, everything is ended with the touch of a button.

The last time we spoke, respective kissing sounds ended our conversation: the sound of a "smooch" is oddly akin to a rapidly deflating tire; the phrase "sizzle of romance" elicits the sound of a cigarette extinguished in drink.

§

Listening to classical music through the door left open, over the tinkle of piss.

The nights. Things are always funny & sometimes aren't at all. But there you are. And I've always been here, anyway, I've said. To feel this constantly. Just looking at a map of New

* By "primitive" it's meant: the state of feeling sans thinking—the heart wholly taken & moved by natural phenomena, having a total absence of intellectual interruption.

York City. So many people. To think I was rattling a rattle in a crib, or nursing upon my mother's breast. Life is the promise & the renegeing of the promise, & the promise again.

Does x open a new chapter in my life? Or only paraphrase previous sentences? Life— the body— has limits. There's only so much one can do to one's body. There's only so much of a beating a body can take. Life begins from the middle that's the start. The world is invented every second, moment.

Would the author of *Go Ask Alice* ever have guessed that her words would lie on the same shelf as Aurelius in my library? I doubt it. She never would have dreamed.

17 | MISTA ANT'S HOME

Under the earth. Mista Ant lived, of course, in the snaking subterranean tunnels of the ant colony. Were it possible to look at his home in cross-section (picture an ant farm, say), the totality of the paths of the ants' territory would appear, at first glance, to resemble the hieroglyphs of the ancients. And the home's entrance— the anthill— in cross-section could be likened to a human breast, the ant tunnels appearing quite like the lactiferous ducts through which milk travels, out of the nipple & into the world.

18

That people think they are separate from the Earth: how could this ever happen? *The only remedy is the image*. The image is the only thing between ourselves & the Earth, the only thing between the material and the immaterial. Science & art have created this image for ages, will continue creating this image for ages to come. And the image created— like everything ever created— will persist in its evolution. *This image of connection must be made*.

19 | PLASTIC AND JUMPING

I propose that two formidable "problems" obfuscating people's understanding of the nature of life— *and thereby threatening the continuity thereof*— are 1) *plastic*, and 2) *our ability to jump off of the ground*.

. . .

1) This is my query regarding plastic: is it possible that, on a level of (or just below) thought: could one's considerations of plastic elicit praise of human ingenuity to a degree stating— explicitly or implicitly— that: *human ingenuity is somehow apart from or above the level of the Earth?*

This isn't a callous pondering. I only wonder if, for many people, plastic serves— on however subtle a level— as a kind of "proof" that humankind is somehow superior to Earth & nature? Insofar as humankind has created a substance able to mimic nature's forms, and, what's more, a substance capable of creating new forms which natural materials could never?

2) And this is my issue with jumping: I wonder if the mistaken belief of our separateness is also partially founded in the fact that we can leave (i.e., *separate ourselves from*) the Earth's surface, as we quite often do via sprightly knees, sometimes even with skateboards, bicycles, and other wonderful, partly-made-of-plastic things, like 747s, rocket ships, or whatever else? Indeed, we are separate; yet simultaneously, we're inseparable from Earth all the same. Were our eyes capable of seeing at the atomic level— viewing the atoms comprising us, the air, & everything else on Earth— *always*: the vision produced would be that of *there being no difference between ourselves and anything else*. Not a rock, cloud, table, frog, computer, other person, or anything else at all.

20 | MISTA ANT OSTRACIZED

Mista Ant longed to tell the world something of the truth. But he felt that, for his words, the world would reject him. And so— in a darker moment, as sometimes happens— he phrased aloud to himself the following query: *Truth, are you not like a land mine? Planted by & for the purposes of adults, yet left for other generations' children to discover? Discover at the last moment possible for discovery?*

Quite unknown to Mista Ant, his words had been overheard by a partially underground bird. And his burrowed friend Ostrich had something to say about them: *But my dear Ant! Those who*

lay large eggs must expect to be ostracized! All great minds were born “at the wrong time” — is this not much of what makes them great? And when they die, they die like dandelions... know that there’s a breath which kisses the dandelion to pieces — & it’s for the wish. This breath is change’s wind, which brings the birth of the great mind’s followers — the wish, of course, is the great mind’s work. Mista Ant looked into Ostrich’s dark and golden eyes as he continued. And while the pace of change may at first seem glacial... do you not intend to form new continents? The sea brings everything together faster than you think.

21 | MASTURBATING, AS IT WERE

It frequently seems that the only occasion when people are guaranteed to pay attention to the matter at hand is when masturbating. Of course if you hurl a projectile at them, it can be expected they’ll react to deflect it. But excepting actions protecting from immediate harm & those providing immediate pleasure (however ephemeral): people are pretty far from guaranteed to act before the reality of a given situation really sets in. And sometimes at such a point, evasive action is no longer possible.

This is problematic to say the least. To be sure, self-interest & self-defense make perfect sense: we need to look out for ourselves. Self-interest & self-preservation are, without doubt, necessary to life. And nothing’s inherently wrong with pleasuring oneself, no matter how fleeting the feeling. What’s tricky is when things are compounded as follows: when the form of self-pleasuring simultaneously affects the distant or not-so-distant future in a not-so-good or even devastating manner. The following is a quote from a person involved in leading our nation:

“Should the public come to believe that the scientific issues are settled, their views about global warming will change accordingly. Therefore, you need to continue to make the lack of scientific certainty a primary issue.”

—FRANK LUNTZ, Republican strategist
(quoted in a *New York Times* editorial)

. . .

Does not an intelligent one fail to feel the precipice behind the mirage?

22

)i(<—does that not look like a butterfly?
It looks precisely like one, no? Don't you think?

[*Though Tara said it looked like a woman's spread legs, vagina & clit...*]

23

I went up onto the roof for a cigarette and a beer, and it occurred to me that two things I've needed most in life— or've relied upon most in my history of making things— have been a view & a substance. And now when I smoke and drink and look, the emotive surge towards existential contemplation & creation is unmistakable, is a permanent import of the drugs; a beloved import, though not without problems: *addiction*.

I imagine now: the view of our world, nestled snugly in its suspendedness, circling the sun, set in the invisible tautness of gravity. And we hurtle, flying out & coming back in the vertical direction (orbit), traveling headlong in the horizontal direction (the sun's path) all the while. *To hurtle* is the very first nature of the Earth, after which is *to spin*. The pages of all great works of literature are turned alike like a Möbius strip, seemingly exposing "anew" truths which have remained pretty much the same from time immemorial.

If a butterfly's wings might cause a tornado in Texas, so might the turning pages of a book? Why is it so difficult to change oneself? So difficult to turn the page? The Vaseline, perhaps.

§

Suicide— or, more precisely, the image of death, generally in the form of a bullet having blown through my skull— has become a staple of thought of late. Perhaps that is how this year is different from others: the image of suicide as a staple of thought. But only now and again.

The day has passed, thus far, without incident. But only if you refrain from counting sudden losses of energy as “incident,” the day has passed without incident. The sick feeling surges in one’s stomach, as if the stomach held waves. A mood falls upon one like the tide, and can be expected to leave in much the same way, bringing and taking.

The world has only as much mystery as you permit for it to. The smell of pressing your face to an old screen door, hey.

24

(Sitting in the doctor’s office waiting room.) Some anger. A moment of not liking people.

There’s a little girl. I think she’s four or maybe five— not much taller than a yardstick.

This girl, her love & lovingness, it all coming out so freely. Kissing her mother. Cuddling with her older brother. How she jumps up onto their laps, her hugging & squirming; there’s just so much love in this little kid. To her mother, she proudly reads the date printed on a medical form: “April fourteenth... two-thowzand and four!” Then I look over to see the mother’s & child’s smiles together.

What I saw, seeing this effusively-loving gem of a child more closely, was this: the difficulty & rejections in her life to come, most of which’ll start in just under ten years. What I’m saying is this: her eyes were spaced extremely far apart. A number of her classmates will mock her for this, make up names for her & seek to crush her, and will often enough succeed. We’ve all seen it happen. This girl has love the world so badly needs. And the release of this girl’s love, so badly needed by the world, will be significantly obstructed by some little fuckers.

25

If there were certainty of an afterlife, life would be meaningless. There’d be no reason to live now— no reason to try hard & try one’s best— if one knew he or she could just as well live again later.

. . .

Uncertainty is thus fundamental to life.

To produce certainty as regards an afterlife (were it possible) would be as good as to murder the species. (And therefore, by logic: *certainty of an afterlife is impossible, can never be known.*) I will never have certainty as regards what happens after death.

The living don't know where they'll go when they're dead, and the dead don't know where they'll go when if ever again they're living.

Life, thus, is beautiful.

26

The upwards trickle of certain thoughts, or madness. Up like that: trickle your fingers & raise your arms to the above & then let them drop before you reach x , as you haven't the energy, the wherewithal. Drowned, and then diving cigarettes into half-finished drinks, and the notion of what one negotiates with when one "negotiates with life."

§

"Don't worry. I don't foresee you'll be at a loss for affection."
And: don't wanna wash the sheets with the scent of her still on them. The image now coming to mind: dust passing under the spotlight.

Oh & when the crescendo meets the denouement.

§

A scene from an end-of-the-relationship prior is Alana: a tear falling towards her ear, because on the bed beside me she was looking up at the ceiling. It happened around when the word *love* had been used as a kind of strategic magnet, to discover if the other harbored any of the same feelings as the sender.

The sound of people — lovers or roommates — trying to be quiet in the middle of the night or in the morning. The way that when you kill a moth in your hand it leaves gold and iridescences. The distinct quiet of a car when you close the door in the suburbs or in the country, and the cricket night comes in still & all the