EDITOR: L. Parker **DESIGNER:** Penny Metal

INTERVIEWED

TOM VAGUE, DAN MITCHELL, SUPERVERT, OWEN HATHERLEY

NEW IMPRESSIONS OF HARRY MATHEWS/ THE BIG OTHER/SITUATIONIST BOXING

Lester Langway

BAILIE

Edmund Davie/ Tim Siddall / L. Parker

TRITINAS/SYLLABLE SWITCHING AT RANDOM INTERVALS/I GOT THIS DUST ALLERGY/ THIS CONTINUES ON

Davie/Parker

BOOTY

Cathy Leung/Luke Davis/Davie

JONATHAN WRITES MUSIC /UNTITLED
KERNED EPIC/ "OTHER HAND VILLAGERS"/
PLEASE HELP ME/UNTITLED ITERATIONS/
TROPIC OF MISERY/ARTIST/DMT/
ENGLISH AS IT SPAKE

Davie

THE PALACE

Davis

BODY SWAP AT THE AIRPORT/ TRANSFORMATION TUESDAY

Chris Campanioni

THE VISIT/SENSATION IN HALF-SLEEP

Karel Hlaváček/John Macmillan (trans.)

AL GORE'S RHYTHM SECTION

Marc Nash

THE TRUTH ABOUT GHOST STATIONS

Oliver Harris

CUSTOMER 8

Madeline Gobbo/Miles Klee

SHAKESPEARE: TORY SCUM

Natasha Rukavishnikova/L. Parker

PHOTOGRAPHS

Matthias Klein/Ben Graville

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Such a journal as this aims at a nominally artistic status only and has no particular wish to attain any kind of authority, a fact you may confirm by skimming its list of contributors.

Agog at artistic production's now parlous, nay moribund condition, A VOID has as its goal non-participation and a thorough analysis of this morbidly anti-art autophagy, its ubiquity shown by any bookshop.

No proof - no opportunity for discussion - no pity! Only porn and acrostics.

An ax to grind as big as your grandma. a virtual coffin for trump, duffy, motion, simon armchair,

and so on.

POFNOGram

PROSE

To paraphrase Tolstoy, each literary magazine stinks in its own way, although there are some startling consistencies between all the titles, which makes our job of vaulting them all in one go easier than it should be.

Political magazines rarely have good poetry except when Simic or Ashbery are in them, and not a single literary magazine has interesting politics.

It's sickening to think that the art form Dada and Surrealism emerged from is now almost exclusively a conformist vehicle for toadies, funded by government agencies and universities run as businesses.

Literature has sealed itself off from the fundamental problems with the world because literary culture is based on the delusion that once a writer has had their work published, there are no problems in the world. At least not political or economic ones. While we don't like didactic or propagandist poems, we wanted to create a magazine that aids the emancipation of thought from the doctrine of liberal capitalism that other literary magazines explicitly or implicitly propagandise.

Another problem with literary magazines is their obsession with individual status and total lack of regard for what Breton

EDITORIAL

termed "collective revelation." Most of them exist purely to furnish the CVs of their contributors. For this reason we have made the decision to promote collaborative efforts (including translations) and not to publish any single-author poetry in the first edition of A VOID, unless it's been created using an Oulipian-style constraint or new form. Many of them were composed hastily, as a kind of parlour game. If there's a theoretical justification for this horseplay, it's to reclaim poetry as a form of entertainment, and to relinquish the fallacy that an author can ever be in control of language, a material structure owned by no person or institution.

In addition to works of literary creation, we promote with extensive interviews two comrades whose work is too shocking for polite society: the author and philosopher Supervert, and the artist Dan Mitchell. We met up with one of the UK's smartest cultural critics, Owen Hatherley, to talk about architecture and blogging. The legendary punk fanzine editor Tom Vague was ambushed by our fictional gonzo journalist Lester Langway, whose actions we do not condone, and whose words we do not trust. Finally, we lament the passing of Oulipo maestro Harry Mathews, who died before he could see this monument built partly in his honour.

As well as being iconoclasts whose work challenges convention, all our interviewees are independent artists and writers who were chosen for their ability to promote our work on their social networks.

If you like what you read in A VOID and would like to join our cult, email the editor at *info@morbidbooks.net*.

To find out more about our publisher Morbid Books, visit morbidbooks.net

POFNOTFORSALE

A BOY SCOUT'S GUIDE TO

THE FORMS AND CONSTRAINTS IN A VOID

ACROSTIC

Often the first poetic form children learn at school, the first letters of a line spell something—usually the title—down the side of the page. The acrostics in A VOID are restricted to one word per line, as we believe this is the most elegant rendering.

BEAUTIFUL INLAW

Only letters in the title are permitted. Invented by OuLiPo.

BEAUTIFUL OUTLAW

Only letters not in the title are permitted. Invented by OuLiPo.

CUT-UP

The merging of two or more texts, often attributed to William Burroughs.

TRITINA

Tamar Yoseloff says the Tritina was invented by American poet Marie Ponsot, who came up with a kind of "square root" of the Sestina by cutting its length in half. The poems in A VOID, however, are more heavily reduced Tritinas: the title and every subsequent line are squashed into three syllables; the three title words must also end every line. The result is a barely human grunt. Invented by E. Davie and L. Parker on the South Bank of the Thames, 2017.

KERNING

"In typography, kerning is the process of adjusting the characters between spaces in a proportional font, usually to achieve a visually pleasing result," usually to create straight margins. On a manual typewriter with fixed-width font, however, this is not possible, so a form of kerning—or "justification"—is possible by writing lines with the same number of characters. A VOID uses two typefaces to allow for both kinds of kerning—one to make prose look neater, and a fixed-width font to maintain the spatial integrity of poetry.

SQUARE ACROSTIC

Other forms of square acrostic exist, although the ones in A VOID spell the title with the first letter of every word vertically and with the first letter of every word going across the page. Invented by Tim Siddall on the South Bank of the Thames, 2016.

LIPOGRAM

A text missing a certain letter or letters, the most notable being *A Void* by Georges Perec of the OuLiPo, an entire novel without the letter e.

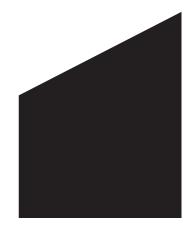
the OuLiPo, an em.

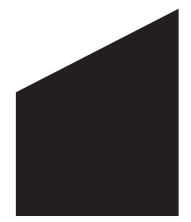
CHRISTIANITY

I like Jesus that hippie. Upstairs I'm limited, you know. Mental powers given

to people like me are wasted! All I wanted was a simple life of dogs and turmoils uncriticised by Levitivus and Donovans records playing everywhere I go. But I am also

> spine tingle laid back on the S&M sofa made of nail and glowing, I, temperate and honestly good at suck so please be respectful n listen to my cries to god





WAR ON DRUGS

take some drugs start a war switching on

power on lovely drugs funny war

hell is war when you're on the right drugs

war on drugs

I HATE YOU

until i first saw you what was hate?

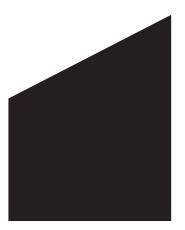
i thought hate
was what i
felt for you.

i met you.
now i hate
you and i.

i hate you







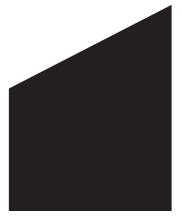
MAKE ME CUM

when i make myself cum shame on me.

please love me. i can make ladies cum.

will you come visit me and lovemake?

make me cum



LOTS OF DRUGS

i take lots of weird drugs. mountains of

acid, of
cocaine, lots
of strong drugs.

lethal drugs. dreaming of vacant lots.

lots of drugs

tritinas



I LOVE SEX

what if i had some sex without love?

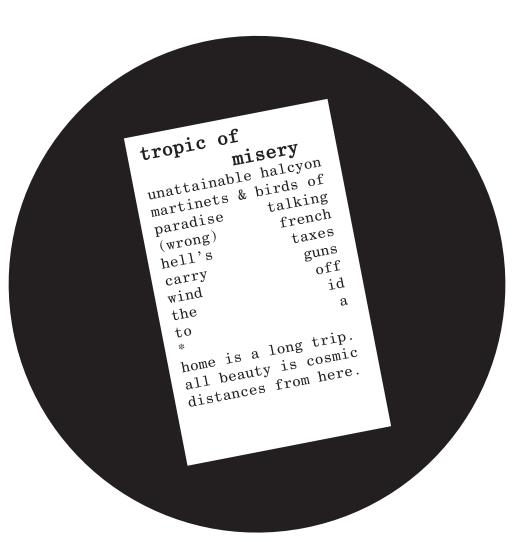
i would love
 trying. i
need some sex.

filthy sex.
keep the love.
know what i

i love sex

tritina

POFNOTFORSALE



POFNOTFORSALE



A few years ago my friend and I had arrived early to a fashion show at a small vintage shop, and I was telling him about this great book I was reading called *Necrophilia Variations* by an authorial entity known only as Supervert, who lives in New York City, and is the author of four books including *Perversity Think Tank* and *Extraterrestrial Sex Fetish*. He describes his hilarious and often beautifully philosophical 2005 book as a "literary monograph on necrophilia, the erotic attraction to corpses and death." It achieved an unusual amount of notoriety for a self-published literary monograph when the porn star Stoya was filmed reading it aloud while she was brought to orgasm with a vibrator, as part of the *Hysterical Literature* video series.

Ten minutes into my enthusiastic *Necrophilia Variations* review, the owner of the clothes shop, a woman in her late thirties who had been quietly peeling cucumber into the gin and tonics behind us, interrupted me and hissed: "Stop talking about necrophilia now. There are *ladies* about to arrive."

Supervert, what would you have said in this situation?

Since it was a vintage shop, I might have complimented the owner on her ability to do business in a sort of sartorial necrophilia. The clothes she sells create an intimacy between the skin of a living person and those

SALE

of a former owner who is absent or quite possibly dead. Come to think of it, the repulsion that some feel at the thought of wearing secondhand clothes or sleeping in used sheets is likely a weak form of the aversion people have for touching a dead body.

I guess you must have developed a strategy for dealing with the subject of your books in polite company.

As for polite company, it is not much of an issue. I'm polite. Also Supervert is cultish-willfully distant yet compelling to those who feel its call. This filters out the majority of the those would be offended by it.

Can literature ever be perverse, according to the Perversity Think Tank definition?

The secret of Perversity Think Tank is that it sets out but ultimately fails to define perversity. The failure, however, results in the creation of concepts such as perveme and perversionism. That was the book's latent trajectory-from definition, boundary, and fixity to fluidity, open-endedness, and creativity. So-can literature ever be perverse? Yes. But it is not because of the sexual proclivities of writers or because easy analogies come to mind (such as that literature is to consumer culture what kink is to the missionary position). Flip your question around and the answer reveals itself. What writing is normal or, to make it even clearer, normative? Bibles, law books, contracts, employee agreements, loan documents, software licenses. In addition to religious and legal writing, informational writing such as journalism is normative. It establishes the "facts." In contrast, literature is without limit, taboo, injunction, inhibition, "must," or "should."

Literature is freedom in language. It is possible to make other uses of this freedom—for example, in literature that agitates against oppression or injustice—but the fact that freedom is at the foundation of literature ensures that, yes, literature can be perverse.

You write that perversion is motivated by the pervert's knowledge that the act is frowned upon. By your reasoning, a necrophiliac would cease to be interested in corpses, or a paedophile would not be interested in children, if it was normal. Do you not account for the inherent appeal of the thing in itself to the fetishist or the pervert? I don't remember you actually asking any perverts what their motivation was in PTT...

In Perversity Think Tank, I suggested that Baudelaire's "la conscience dans le mal" characterizes something about perversity—its lucidity, its awareness of being in the wrong. I did not mean to imply, however, that perversion is motivated solely by disapproval. That is only one of the complex of factors that cause the sexual equivalent of an idée fixe to take root in someone's mind. You are absolutely right—the desiderata of a fetishist are supercharged, invested with all kinds of psychic enticements. But I do think that they lose something when they become "normal." It's the same with swearing. Imagine how delightful it must once have been to scandalize the gentlefolk with a mere "damn."

(of many is in 'Distress in a Dress', where you wonder bout a girl whose late father was a holocaust and UN peacekeer." bout a girl whose late father was a holocaust survivor and UN peacekeeper: "would sadness make her sexy?"

The inherited sorrow from the deaths of 6 million people made her incandescent. She was the individual repository of the pogroms and holocausts... she was a vulnerable little thing tossed up by a tidal wave of blood.

As virtuosic as this description is, I've experienced enough liberal hysteria myself to know that when a man describes a woman from this perspective, he's going to have to face the accusation that's it's still just highly imaginative misogyny. Is this something you get a lot, and how do you respond to it?

Thank you for the kind words about *Necrophilia Variations*. My impression is that Supervert's audience is more female than male. The women I speak to are incredibly thoughtful in what they have to say about my books and about sexuality in general. Stoya, for example, told me one reason she chose to read "Confessions of a Skull Mask" in Hysterical Literature is because it was the only story in *Necrophilia Variations* that did not have an obviously male narrator. It was a fascinating insight.

No one has ever suggested to me personally that the books are misogynistic. I do not believe that they are but at the same time I recognize that they explore a dangerous place. Over time, I have developed a practical way of managing this. I write from id — meaning that I write with abandon, I write whatever I have to write, without regard for nicety or who's going to be offended by what. But when I edit, I try to adopt different points of view. I imagine how various people, male and female, will respond to what I've written. It's like crowdsourcing the editing process except that I do it by myself. This

furnishes me with distance from the text and helps me think through questions like, "Is this important to say? Or am I being an asshole?"

My hope is that this schizoid method of editing, in addition to strengthening every text, enables me to be clear in my point of view. In other words, the books may describe unsavory practices or unpleasant characters but I would be remorseful if they put forth a misogynistic world view. I'm not William Burroughs saying "women are a biological mistake." (Yeah. He actually wrote that.)

You must receive some really weird fan mail. Besides the Stoya video, which is literally an author's masturbation fantasy, what else?

That depends on your definition of "weird." I very much appreciate the things that people write or sometimes send. On the whole they seem to have one of two motives for reaching out. There are those who want to express admiration or love. Whatever form the expressions take—emails, books, recordings, artwork, pictures, love letters, some intimate item— you can't help but be grateful to elicit these feelings in people. Then there are those who are confused or in pain. They are tormented by their desires. They suffer from feelings of isolation, shame, self-loathing. They reach out in the hopes of connection, clarity, absolution. You can't help but be compassionate toward them.

Only once has it really become a problem. There was an arson fetishist who derived great pleasure from describing how he was going to set fire to the place I live. He would do his best to stalk up personal information—GPS coordinates or the names of blood relatives—so that he could appear

SRSALE

to be genuinely threatening. It was troublesome but I live in New York. I've seen weirder shit.

Why don't you let anyone else publish your work—is it a BDSM hooded-tormentor control thing?

From time to time I do let someone have a text. Recently, for example, I contributed the introduction to a book of photographs of Stoya. But overall you are right. I don't like to let others publish my work. I write from obsession. I invest an intense amount of thought and conviction in every sentence. I have a very clear vision of Supervert's enterprise. Museum curators don't touch up paintings before they hang them on the wall. Why should an editor touch my text? Why should a marketing department change my title? Why should a designer give my book a cover that gives the wrong impression? A book should not be a compromise between employees who hate their jobs and a writer who would rather sell out than fight to the death for his vision. A book should be like the Edvard Munch painting—a scream, an existential encounter between the writer and the reader. That's what I want you to get from a Supervert production. A blood transfusion. An electric shock. A kiss.

Most of your physical books are sold out and you don't seem interested in reissuing them. Do you get a perverse—or perhaps, entirely rational—kick out of seeing them accumulate in value?

I suffer for what I write. I don't mean to ennoble it, there are clearly worse forms of suffering, but in the end it is a self-lacerating process to put out a book. There are the torments of writing, editing, and design. There are the costs of printing and the time-consuming hassles of shipping. I tend to lose money on the physical books—and I take pride in making this sacrifice. It is my hope that people intuit it somehow, that they see in the books' material qualities that I am willing to hurt and ache in order to put them out into the world.

I like the thought of readers suffering for them too. Casual ones will not care to do this, they will download an electronic version, skim, throw away, that's all fine, I'm copyleft. But the devoted ones, the ones I care about, will appreciate that to read is to suffer, that to understand the texts may take an exertion, that to own or collect the physical books may require a material sacrifice. The compact that I offer, the faustian bargain of the Supervert production, is this: my pain for yours. You and I, writer and reader, can be united intimately through the shared commitment to undergo a literary agony. One day I would like to produce a book that would deliberately hurt people. The words would wound their feelings and the object would cut their fingers so that they could not turn a page without bleeding on it. A very small number of people would be willing to take this experience on themselves and I would love them for it.



BOOTY

i speech it, so i say it near enough to smell its armpits. it were the reformation that started it Germany, Martin, Luther, a man quite stubborn in all his ways banging theses to the door. eating, cheating, heating, and its a habit, i think. Therefore, I'm warming to it the prospect, that is, of a future. they dispute it, say its, not possible. Life INTERMINABLE. Really? Nearly. POFNOTFORSALE I helped it, but it didnt pay off. A hedgehog wandered across its evolution. create an insect, next thing you know you got an insect eater, and covered in thorns too. its a kind of logic. 1 thing leads to

ANOTHER.
then the flow starts to dwindle
to a trickle
in the channel
running rivulets
rippling,
rapids,
its riverine
rollings remember retributions
rinsed aeons ago
from the hair
hoping it'll dissolve
.... which is to say

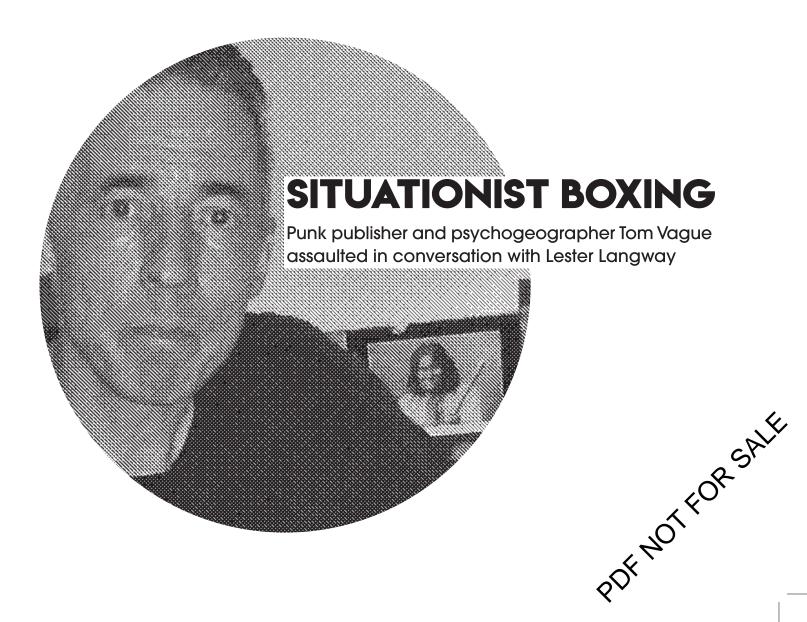
it won't. things
don't behave the way you want
wont help/
heap it.
stack up change
leave it on the windowsill
for the sparrows to nibble

it's now CHANGE happens its how WE THE PEOPLE make a DIFFERENCE. crumb by crumb. its humble, but it knows that's an act, pointing at the doorway. Go, my sweet thimble my good gyre my gimble my sign my symbol. suck me, sell it it

POFNOTFORSALE

ain't common hence not cheap or always in stock or even sought after. Butter mountain fragrant fountain. its what we call comfort fit, aka, the mom jean. wait here. i'm thinking. don't fidget with that axe or meddle with the instruments. theyre fragile. it takes yers of training yeah? YERS and i don't think you've got yers to spend. i think you should be at home. darning my socks. its not a question of uh, anything, that you think. its just what we scienteists call natural, uh, science. hard. cold. science. darwiniian./mendelian./huxley knew the lot. scoffed all the chelsea bums uh 'eat the booty like groceries' in the words of a pop star 2016. i remember it well. a watershed. anal play went mainstream. cleaning that up OFNOTFORSALE was like that hercules story, up to twenty fathoms deep in clay. its claggy, grey and hangs on the blade of the shovel.

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IGOTHISDUAL
IGOTHISDUSTALLE
IGOTHISDUSTALLERG
IGOTTHISDUSTALLERGY



One of the ultimate scenesters and a personal hero of mine, Tom Vague started writing and publishing VAGUE magazine in 1979 as a "provincial punk" in Salisbury. Like me and my first press card, he used the photocopied fanzine as a ticket backstage to meet his favourite bands—for Tom that was Adam and the Ants, Siouxie and the Banshees, the Pop Group. When not on the dole he worked in an abattoir. "If I was stopped by police and was asked, what do you do, I'd say, I kill pigs," he told me. In 1980 VAGUE became the official programme for the Ants' UK tour. The band sold 10,000 copies on their merch stand. After that, Tom mercifully dropped music from the mag (along with the juvenile, Smash Hits-y writing style), upped the production values and turned VAGUE into a much more potent psychotropical drug for the blank generation. Going over VAGUE back issues from 79 to 92-now rare collectors' items—I can't help but be dazzled by the spectacular upscaling of its ambitions, not just from photocopy to glossy, but from adolescent "Antzine" to a full-on "Psychic Terrorism Annual." The nearest thing to cover stars were cult films like Apocalypse, Now!, novelists Ballard and Gibson, the Baader-Meinhof gang, and Tom's other great love affair after Adam and Siouxie-those pop-stars of radical theory, the Situationist International.

I met Tom in a Portobello pub garden on a bright March afternoon. Wearing a smart Marks & Spencer coat over tracksuit bottoms, he ordered his usual pint of the cheapest beer on tap and didn't object when I offered to pay for it. He told me this was going to be a nightmare to transcribe, and I believed him. He talks in snippets and snaggles, rarely finishing a sentence. "I don't consider myself a writer," he said when I came back

out with his ale. "That's me feeling sorry for myself."

Vague is one of the most prolific name-droppers I've ever met.

I asked him to elaborate, but he muttered something about Pete Frame and his rock family trees, the bands the Slits, the Raincoats and the Tesco Bombers. "I might be made out as a Situationist or psychogeographer, but everything goes back to pop trivia with me."

When I came back from the bar again, he was sneaking a peak at my notepad where I'd written the name of the pub. "It's the Earl of Lonsdale," he said. "Not the Duke. You know, the boxing guy."

His eyes are sometimes bulging, often squinting. He jabs away at his trusted topic like a journeyman boxer.

I asked whether, in hindsight, he thinks punk ever had much in common with radical left politics of the Situationists, or if it was just a pseudo-intellectual appropriation by music industry rats like Malcolm McLaren, which fanboy suckers like him and Greil Marcus got taken in by.

"When the Pistols came out, it was DIY, start your own band, start a fanzine, a small business. That can be seen as pretty similar to Thatcherism."

"What do you think?"

"You could say that."

We'd been talking for over an hour by this point and he was still being surprisingly evasive and noncommittal. "But what do you think, Tom?"

of the counterculture. It was part of the golden age."

"Would you like to be a newspaper columnist like Burchill or Tony Parsons?"

"I don't have the journalistic ability." Julie Burchill or Tony Parsons?"

"You do have journalistic ability."

He slurped his pint and gave me an embarrassed look. "Please!"

Vague ducking a diving, I nudged the Dictaphone across the table.

"I have a moral thing that's stopping me."

"What is it?"

"I'm Tom Vague. I'm not one thing or the other."

Taking wild swings now. Vague covering up. "Why?"

"Burchill said she's a fan of Margaret Thatcher. I can't agree with that."

"Why?"

"I just hated Margaret Thatcher."

"WHY?"

"She considers punk a popular thing and not avantgarde. VAGUE was more post-punk. Joy Division and the Pop Group..."

"!!!"

It was heading for a stalemate by namedrop, so I banged my head against the table three times, knocked myself into a daze, staggered over to the bar. "Barmaid! Two pints of whatever's cheap," I slurred. She was from Eastern Europe. I asked her name. "Thanks, Svetchlna," I smiled.

When I sat back down, Tom was looking at me with his long, mournful face, slightly welted and bruised, still nursing his second drink. "I'm having a mid-to-late-life crisis," he said. "I don't really have anything to say about punk anymore."

A few nights before, I was at a party where Stewart Home, god knows why, was giving the introduction to a useless Welsh poet. As is Home's custom nowadays, he gave the address standing on his head. The only way I manage to tolerate this kind of thing is to get blind drunk, and this time was no exception. I lost several friends that night. I also happened to bring a copy of the "Televisionaries" issue of VAGUE out with me. I either passed out or got kicked out. Either way, I lost it. I had a look on eBay afterwards, and couldn't find one for less than forty quid. I love that magazine, and I wanted it back. After spending the next hungover day rushing between London's only known VAGUE stockists, Housmans on Caledonian Road and the Freedom bookshop in a piss-soaked Whitechapel alleyway, I discovered they were all deVAGUEd.

"Are you up for doing some photos?" I asked.

"Yeah man, why not. Where do you want to...?"

"Can I get a shot of you in front of the VAGUE archive?"

"They're all at my place."

"Ah."

"I could go and get them."

"The whole archive? I don't think you could carry them all."

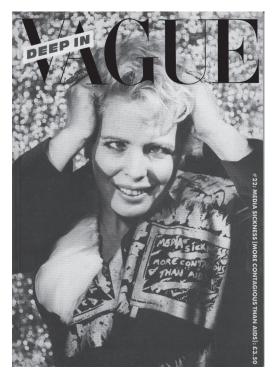
Tom looked around, checked his phone. I downed my pint and got the camera out, played with the zoom. "The light's no good in here, and I don't think we could do it on the street."

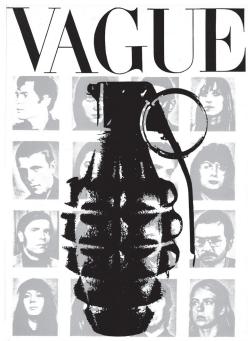
"So you want to come back to mine then?"

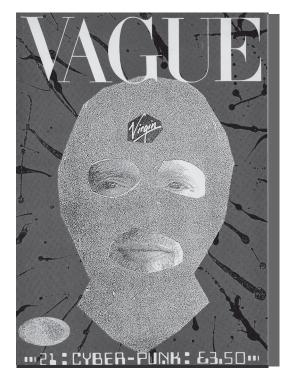
Of course I did. At 4pm we were six rounds in, walking down Portobello Road with its antique creeps, ersatz rock & roll merch and Sex Pistols union flags.

Tom's lived in the same Ladbroke Grove housing cooperative for the last twenty years, on a pedestrianised precinct between Portobello Road and Tavistock Gardens, scene of the 1990s "bongo wars" between the crusties and local residents. "I felt bad about making

RSALE







20:TELEVISIONARIES: &2.50

noise complaints because I was a punk rocker who made noise in my early days." He takes a room on the first floor, at the front of the pastel-coloured terrace building, which he shares with housemates. The room's packed with Tom's archive, carefully stacked in dense blocks under the table in the middle of the room.

The holy grail!

He offered me a chair and sat at his desk with Facebook open, rolling a joint while I looked at stapled computer printout of a presentation he gave at the local library, showing how the 1957 Rent Act dovetailed with pop culture - classic Tom Vague material in a softer format. Local history projects like this -"psychogeography" if you've got a master's degree – are funded by a friendly Labour councillor, who pays him an income barely above Jobseekers' Allowance.

I was curious to know how a Situationist justifies taking government money from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. "I don't know if I do," he said.

We were listening to Wire's Pink Flag on YouTube. He was hogging the joint and sipping Red Stripe cans slowly, replying to messages. I wondered if he's still doing anything transgressive. "Living like this still, or squatting, or dripping out. Or just being anti-work. I'm workshy."

"Yeah, man, here you go."

"You talk a lot about the past. But do you think re's anything to live for in the present?"

Between Wire tracks, Tom looked up at the walls, there's anything to live for in the present?"

shelves of punk cassettes and fanzines, books on Situationist theory, punk and television, the century of analogue. "Well, just my own personal revolution. I'm carrying on with that."

I leaned back in the office chair, put my feet on Tom Vague's desk and inhaled the joint. "What's your own personal revolution?"

"Not working nine to five, doing what you want to do." I gave him the yeah, really? look.

"I have succeeded, but the breakdown I had, if I wasn't on the Venlafaxine..."

"What was the breakdown?"

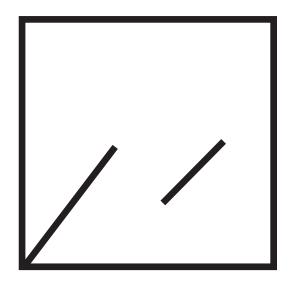
"Not sleeping. Anxiety, depression. Not being able to write was the main one. Struggling to answer questions! Or maybe thinking that I have conformed,

I am just working for the council, really. All the various factors. Just being old and past it and never really doing much in the first place."

It was 9pm and Tom probably had archival research to be doing, or a local campaign to save the local library to co-ordinate. I didn't know what to say by means of farewell, other than I liked his work very much, particularly the later editions of VAGUE, which I was very sad to have had stolen from me by a gang on Rye Lane the other week. "Oh man, that sucks. Which editions?" his Personal Vagueness asked as I was putting my bag over my shoulder.

He went and fetched a slab of psychic terror from the archive and gave them to me. Not bad at all, I thought to myself. A knockout.





TOFF MODERN

is a multimedia afro-bitcoin collective art space in South London.

We offer DJ compilations, fashion collaborations, chillspace occupations, street-food installations, grass-roots publications and protest consultations.

Our monthly club night at the Barry Tentacles gallery in Peckham, and our popup interventions in unexpected locations around Europe such as Minsk Fashion Week and the Auschwitz Biennale, have forged a bold new sustainable space for creative experiments that transcend race, class and gender.

Founded in 2011 by artist Jolyon Goldsmith, photographer Lionel Beetlejuice, writer Rory Asquith-Jones and lawyer Sir Vivian Saunders QC.

POFNOTFORSALE

TWO POEMS BY KAREL HLAVÁČEK (1874–1898)

THE VISIT

For Jiří Karásek

```
I am a locked pavilion in the days of a glorious visit,
built by someone in outlandish times
(so long ago – or maybe never?)
in a rundown corner of a park, decaying into the middle of the untouched
waters . . .
Perhaps over the centuries I had already become overgrown with hemlock
(for when they reaped it they say there was a whole stack of it,
which burned all the vegetation with its bitter smoke);
and all those bees on its flowers, my soul, all those bees . . .
(Oh consuming flames of pain! Oh sickly ones,
whom the Little Sisters of Charity fed honey for refreshment!)
Today workers crossed the hanging bridge
(for it is the day of the glorious visit) and they came with scythes;
listen - how quietly it lays itself down beneath the rhythm of their full sweeps
(let it spray poison!).
They came -
and they placed a couple of swans in the middle of the untouched waters,
see, how in sudden terror they splash and beat their wings
(oh fires fallen into the womb of the lake,
oh, run-cold and faded in the twilight at the bottom of its rotting waters!).
One reaper has already mowed himself a path through the thickening smoke of the
hemlock,

, a third . . . the whole crowd of them . . .

and a series of broken gestures, which you feel emit terror,
sleepwalker's words, accentless, hollowly metallic, fall from their lips:
Oh the glorious visit — the visit comes — the intimate visit . . .
```

Now keys are rattling in the door . . .

The glass of the mirrors awakes from heavy dreams and with a startled look it tries to catch the subtlest movements (which on entering will seem to form your outline) in frames of red golds and pale plushes...

Now keys are rattling in the door . . .

Bizarre majolica throats, in the bottom of which rare scents sleep, tremble with a desire to breathe them out, for perhaps they have been rotted by age . . .

(after all You love them so!).

And the worn enamel on the pendulum of the wall clocks trembles with a desire to start swinging in an unheard tension to break through that cold silence into the furthest corners and to play the last chord of the Chopin adagio, which the mechanism had failed to finish long ago, so long ago . . . Now keys are rattling in the lock . . . The waldhorn and the battered flute, that had begun to dry out and hang crossed on the wall, full of dust tremble with a desire to elicit from their souls that forgotten duet in Your honour (that favourite duet of the marquise, whose hair is mouldering in the crypt), that duet, which in May nights trembled its melody into the sleeping avenues, full of minor and plaintive modulations . . .

The door opens . . . Oh glorious visit, intimate visit!

SENSATION IN HALF-SLEEP

```
Lillies!
I'm so intoxicated by your whiteness . . .
I am closing my eyes,
and I really feel them closing in longing for darkness -
oh God, thank you - it's dark - I can see only darkness -
velvety soft darkness,
black, sour darkness,
the darkness of soot . . .
. . . billows in the darkness,
white clouds -
where did these waves of white mayflies come from?
The darkness is whitened by them, intensively whitened,
but it is whitened noiselessly and frostily - oh what whiteness!
I can feel it all over my body
and most of all on my fingers, that greasy whiteness,
even in my veins I feel it - and I am completely white
and I am drowning in that whiteness, which is everywhere,
I want to scream for help,
but this despairing thought of mine tosses about in that chaotic whiteness -
is smelted down into whiteness by that whiteness, the soundless whiteness,
which is sprinkled over me as a powder from all sides
and presses down on my gestures,
whiteness without end . . .
```

AL GORE'S RHYTHM SECTION

O ym herbrot, owh esfar uyo? Teraf het astl odeepis easepl iveforg isth nerman fo tingwri, tbu I otcann og ughthro therano linggril ta het dshan fo eth licepo. Ullyhopef hist illw oxf nya eillancesurv rithmalgo otsb. Rewsc ouy SAN & QGCH!

Ayanyw no ot pierhap ingsth. I overeddisc veralse inef bumsal fo orey ni ondsec ndha ordrec hopss sterdayye. Het rstfi si Sivemas Ackatt's "Uebl Nesli", meso tonkings unest heret. Xtne pu, Thraxan's "Ongam Het Vingli" si ssiccla rashth talme. Tgo na inalorig singpres fo het Ung Ubcl PL "Iamim" hichw si ampsw esblu ta sit stbe. Allyfin Ombb Het Sbas "Earcl" thwi cea cktra "Gbu Derpow" encingrefer Liamwil Oughsburr "Kedna Nchlu". Erfulwond ffstu.

I stmu og own ym herbrot. Leasep phercy oury plyre.

Velo

Sefyou

THIS CONTINUES ON

snon tuscetoin ih snon custetoin ih snon custitoen ih snon cuntitoes ih shon cuntitoes in thon cuntisoes in thon contisues in thos continues in this continues on



DMT

Desirous moments triumph!
Delicious macaroon trifle
Deadly mushroom teleology
Disturbing matter's truth
Divining magic television
Dear masters! Telekinesis
Doesn't manipulate topics
Diaphanous mystery: trust
Death's morbid trickshots

POFNOTFORSALE

THE TRUTH ABOUT 'GHOST STATIONS'

It is commonly known that a great many stations of both the London Underground and several of the suburban surface railways that run across the city have been closed over the years; some have been relocated while the names of others have vanished from the map altogether. What is *not* widely publicized is that the official reasons given for these closures are, in many instances, totally bogus and have been promulgated by the authorities to prevent widespread public hysteria.

The truth is that these stations have fallen victim. in one way or another, to spectral invasions: from deep underground, originating in realms many miles beneath the deepest of the Tube lines - from the sea, having seeped up the Thames estuary and thence into the London groundwater - from outer space, being channelled down into the earth by the inadvertently conductive edifices of mankind - and from outside the material universe altogether. Here is a small selection of those stations whose reason for closure is known to the author at present; a list of all the disused stations acknowledged by the authorities ever to have existed can be found in various books and online sources, although it is very likely that some stations once existed that were found to have been built close to horrors so deleterious to the general sanity or even outright survival of mankind that their very existence has been erased from all published histories.

St. Mary's (Whitechapel Road), District Line, closed 30 April 1938.

While Chamberlain attempted to appease Hitler in order to avoid another disastrous war in Europe, a top-secret House of Commons select committee was already preparing for the possibility of open hostilities with Germany and was taking every precaution to ensure that, in the eventuality of an invasion, Heinrich Himmler would be denied the opportunity to harness an assortment of cosmic, prehuman forces and entities which the committee knew to exist at various subterranean locations throughout the UK. One such entity has been known since at least the early Victorian era to exist deep underground in the Whitechapel area, and has been speculatively identified as the root cause of the astonishing number of disappearances, murders, suicides and cases of madness known to have occurred in the vicinity over the course of its growth from a small suburb in the early modern era to a major area of inner London by the 20th century. Indeed, some authorities on the urban occult have attributed the 'Jack the Ripper' murders of 1888-91 to an avatar or emanation of this entity.

The station at St. Mary's was closed to the public (ostensibly because it had been rendered redundant by the opening of the new Aldgate East station nearby) following a ceremony intended to create a permanent seal between the strata occupied by the entity and the upper levels in which the subsurface Tube lines ran. Whether the date

RSALE

of May Eve ('Walpurgisnacht') was chosen for reasons of occult auspice or is purely symbolic remains unknown.

York Road, Piccadilly Line, closed 17 September 1932.

This station – the above-ground structure of which is still extant – was abandoned following an infestation of spectral rats which caused a series of instances of mass hysteria in the late 1920s and early 30s. They are, in all likelihood, still there. No attempt has yet been made to control the population, nor is it known whether any material means exists to effect their extirpation. It is entirely possible that the abandonment of the station has simply provided them with the room required for them to breed, and that their population may reach such density that they shall eventually erupt onto street level in an irresistible verminous tide.

City Road, Northern Line, closed 8 August 1922.

The remnants of this station's above-ground structure, situated between Old Street and Angel stations, constitute an immediately recognizable 'entrance to hell'. Only the lift shaft remains, the rest of the station having been demolished in the 1960s. The reason for the station's closure remains obscure, even to students of the occult history of London, but it seems to have been related to the subtle energies flowing in a network of interlaced channels, like a complex mandala, that run at various depths throughout the soil and bedrock of London. Geoffrey of Monmouth, in his History of the Kings of Britain, allusively refers to this network by a Latin phrase variously translated as the 'witch-web' or 'fairy girdle', and which led Brutus of Troy to select the lower Thames basin as the site for his city of *Troia Nova*, 'New Troy', much later called 'London' as a corruption of King Lud's name.

A particular confluence of these channels is located beneath the old City Road station. Although theosophists may well have known about this powerful nexus and tried to warn the City & South London Railway away from building a station here, such advice, it it was given, was ignored. A number of disturbances are known to have occurred here during the two decades in which the station was open, various in nature but tending to involve spontaneous outbreaks of extreme religious fervour, mass hallucinations including visions of angelic hosts (or, conversely, hordes of demons) and other instances of collective madness that resulted in a number of passengers throwing themselves in front of trains or running up to street level, bursting out onto City Road and being hit by cars.

Aldwych, Piccadilly Line, closed 30 September 1994.

One of the more recent closures, Aldwych was opened in 1907 by the Great Northern, Brompton & Piccadilly Railway and remained open throughout almost the entire 20th century. The reason it stayed open so long is that there was never any one watershed event connected with the station that gave the authorities a dramatic shock; rather, it was the accumulated weight of decades of rumour and whispered legendry that led to the eventual cessation of services.

These rumours began soon after the opening of the station and told of passengers having undergone a subtle alteration of face, voice and personality after having boarded or alighted from a train here; some seemed to have aged many years after a journey of just a few minutes, some underwent drastic changes of temperament and some appeared to have witnessed things they refused to speak of but which had dearly taken away some vital part of their inner essence.

SALE

LEWIS PARKER

EDMUND DAVIE

Life's
Endless
Wisdom
In
Short

Endless Deviations Make

Poems.

Useless

A11

Nuisances Deplorable.

Ridiculous Knowledge Despite
Abstract
Variations,

Endlessly Rehashed.

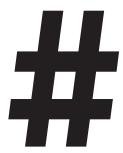
It's
Empty.

acrostic

SIDDALL

Standing in doorways, dozing and looking lost, It's daddy. Dope and loadsa love satisfy Demons, despite a lasting lull. Still, it's Deliberate, destitute ambling, looking lonely And living long. Shoulda intervened. Don't do Leaving Lewis, specially in a London Lull. Stand in doorways. Do a laugh.

square acrostic



JONATHAN WRITES MUSIC

just in time, jonathan can see how he can cheat the winter. he sits & crams

- studies maths & chess.

he sweats at it, his juices mean he can't come home. in his house he starts to jam. he's shit at music; he tries * his jaws seem to stammer somehow.

charts, themes, massages at the chemist's...

sweet master jonathan meets sarah at a show. she's a christian, so jonathan can't caress her... such a shame. she hears his music & is ashamed - jonathan isn't - he's more wise than sarah, & his music is not just noise. it seems sarah's christian nature is a sham...

beautiful inland SALE

NEW IMPRESSIONS OF HARRY MATHEWS



OULIPO GODSTAR HARRY MATHEWS AND THE DEPLORABLE ERNEST HEMINGWAY EXAMINED IN A NEW CHECK UP

Paris, 2015; a bright, faintly overcast spring morning, like a swatch of gauze dipped in cool buttermilk. What was I doing outside the Tory Scum & co. bookshop on the Left Bank? Supposedly I had come here to write poetry on my Olivetti Lettera 32 typewriter for the passing trade. The sign I had taped to my miniature picnic table advertised my services as a "Literary Prostitute," and in smaller font, "Better than Hemingway."

My welcome at the bookshop had been slightly awkward to say the least. And it had, as is often the case, been aggravated by my attempts at honesty and courtesy. "Dear O*****," my email began. "Our mutual friend J**** T**** tells me you're now the manager at Tory

Scum & co. Small world – the period of my life when we last met is very foggy in my mind. I was probably drunk, obnoxious and rude to you, as I was to everybody back then. Please accept my apologies. I hope this won't be an impediment to me writing poetry for donations outside the shop at the end of May?"

The bookshop is known for letting "travelling and attempted some conversation with one of the young Hemingways behind the counter. "What's the new Danielewski book like then?" I asked. "Sorry, what?"

"The title on the promo stand over there. *The Familiar* by Mark Z. Danielewski. He wrote *House of Leaves*.¹ This is his new one."

"I don't know anything about it."

This young fellow, with an ill-advised attempt at a moustache, was trying to get through *A Moveable Feast*.

"I'm going to be writing poetry outside. O****** said it was fine. Do you mind if I use the bathroom before I set up?"

"Only people who work here can use the facilities."

"Do you work here?"

"I sleep here."

"I may need to sleep here tonight. How do I go about that?"

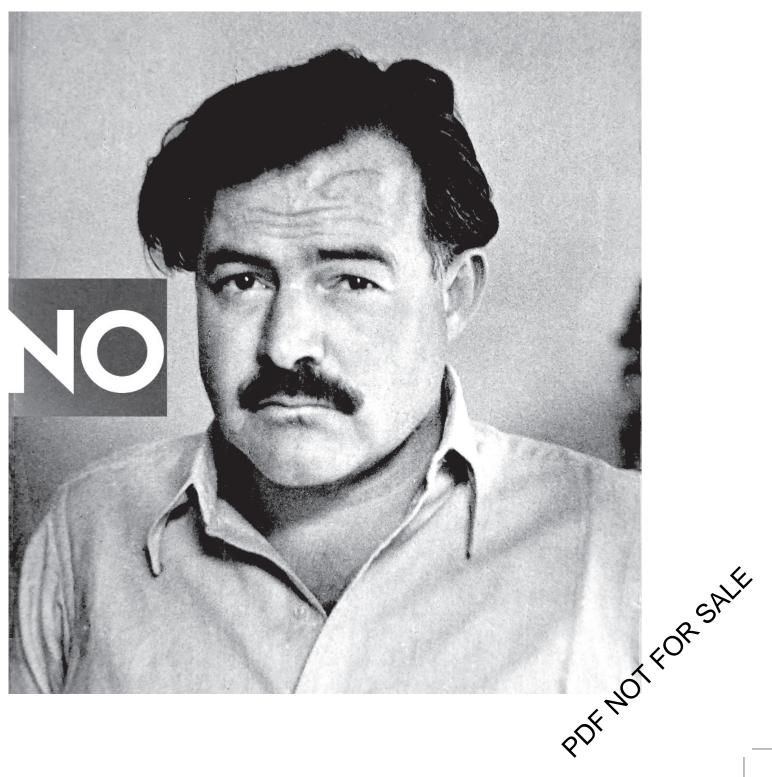
"You need to come back on Monday to speak to the owner. Any more questions?"

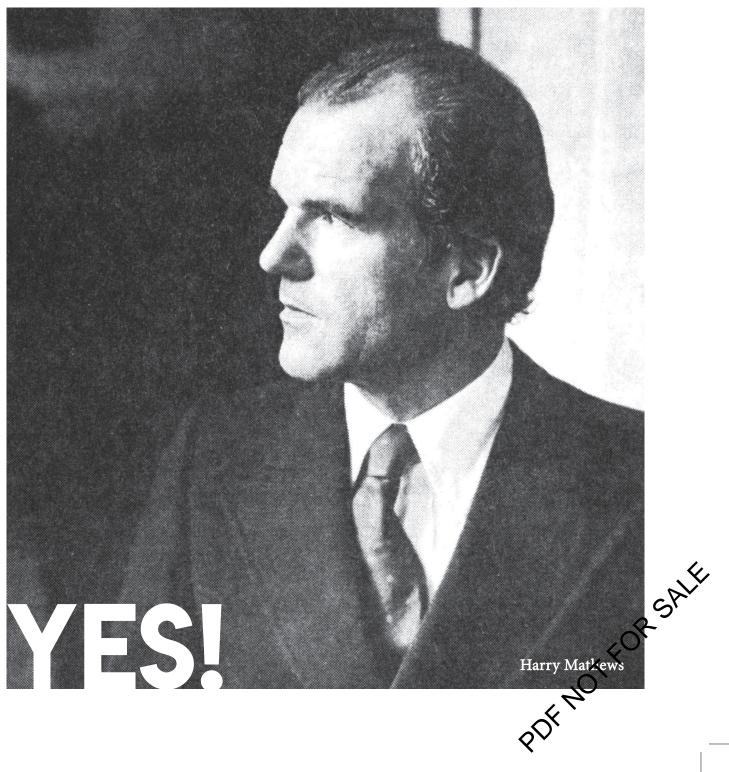
I set up my typewriter outside and waited for the word-hungry johns to come by and exchange their currency for my literature. It turned out there were plenty of them. Tory Scum & co. was so busy they had a rope cordon, and the poor suckers were queuing up outside to fight for space to purchase an overpriced English-language book. While they waited, I wrote them poetry, and occasionally they thanked me for it.

Occasionally somebody would take issue with my slight on Hemingway, and tell me how young Ernest used to come to this very store back in the day.² Of course declaring myself better than the Nobel Prize winner for Literature 1954 was supposed to be amusing, but I still thought it was true.

Ernest Hemingway was the most overrated writer of the 20th Century. He was largely responsible for all that is joyless and sentimental in literature, as well as most of what's phoney and narcissistic. His posthumous memoir of being a "penurious" writer in 1920s Paris, A Moveable Feast, is an insult to anybody who has ever been poor or hungry, or written a line of dialogue. It's testament to Hemingway's abilities as a narcissist that he managed to convince several generations of readers that he was genuinely suffering in 1920s Paris while being showered with gifts from Louis Vuitton³ and personal tuition from Gertrude Stein. True, his first apartment at 74 rue Cardinal Limoine only had "two rooms" and his crapper had to be pumped manually, and since he didn't have a job, Ernest could not always afford to eat three meals a day in a café. We learn from Chapter 3 of A Moveable Feast that he would sometimes economise with a single café crème in the morning while he wrote his turgid prose. When he came home for lunch, are we supposed to empathise with him when we learn that his first wife, Elizabeth Hadley Richardson, had only cooked him "little radishes, and good foie de veau4 with mashed potatoes and an endive salad," and an apple tart for dessert?

When he writes "nothing was simple there; not even poverty," we can't know for sure if he's referring to his own "poverty." Regardless, the loudest message of *A Moveable Feast* is that poverty and its associated effects such as hunger have a positive moral value, they breed "good discipline" and even, ironically exough, a





greater sense of awareness. Like when the fat alcoholic author, from the vantage of 1956, tells us that Cézanne's paintings are "more beautiful if you're belly-empty." This is of course extremely unhelpful to anybody who has ever experienced genuine poverty, as opposed to the bohemian down-at-heel lifestyle Hemingway temporarily adopted. Because what makes penury so insufferable is how it eats the brain as much as the stomach, and leaves the victim in a state of constant mental paralysis, unable to see or appreciate anything that isn't money, food or shelter. For an author whose greatest trait is said to be his telling of simple, universal truths, his observations on the Nature of Want are not only inadequate, they are as deplorable as any overfed man who preaches that there is virtue in suffering.

The problem with Hemingway is not limited to his lack of verisimilitude or moral awareness, although they are astounding for an author of his stature. In the same conversation with his wife in chapter 3, a dialogue occurs that shows all the weaknesses of Hemingway as a stylist:

"But Tatie, you must go by this afternoon and pay," she said.

"Sure I will," I said. "We'll both go. And then we'll walk down by the river and along the quais."

"Let's walk down the rue de Seine and look in all the galleries and in the windows of the shops."

"Sure. We can walk anywhere and stop at some new café where we don't know anyone and nobody knows us and have a drink."

"We can have two drinks."

"Then we can eat somewhere.

"No. Don't forget we have to pay the library."

"We'll come home and eat here and we'll have a lovely meal and drink Beaune from the co-operative you can see right out of the window there with the price of the Beaune on the window. And afterwards we'll read and then got to bed and make love."

"And we'll never love anyone else but each other."

"No. Never."

"What a lovely afternoon and evening. We'd better have lunch."

One of the first things they teach you in writing class is not to overdo the exposition in dialogue, otherwise you end up with characters who are nothing more than wooden, authorial devices. Here the content is vague, generic, clichéd, and exists purely for the benefit of the reader, as the characters tell each other things they both ought to already know, such as what they can see from their own window. When Tatie says to Tatie, "We can walk anywhere..." it's like a bad melodrama or a comic strip from a romance magazine, the kind parodied by Roy Lichtenstein but evoked here without any sense of irony. We may as well have Tatie then say, "and in the summer we can go visit your father on his farm and ride horses, and we'll live happily ever after." As is often the case, the style and substance of the text complement

each other. The stylistic simplicity, a Forrest Gump of its day, is indicative of a chauvinistic sense of moral clarity.

While Hemingway may still be a favourite of the fake rebel beatnik with a pipe and rollneck, anyone coming at it blind—or perhaps from the author's misleading personal association with leading modernists such as Stein, Pound et al.—ought to beware that in *A Moveable Feast*, and most of his other work about fishermen and soldiers, Hemingway is the American simpleton who spread the same intellectually diminished worldview through his books as John Wayne did in the movies and Ronald Reagan in government.

On my second day outside the bookstore I was telling all this to an American in his mid-fifties whose wife was queuing to get into Tory Scum & co. to buy a gift to take back to their friends in Florida. He was not a big reader, but he was interested in my opinions of an author he had read in school, and only heard good things about. "So which books do you recommend I read while I'm in Paris?" he asked.

"Have you heard of Harry Mathews?"

"No."

"You're in for a treat," I said.

Harry Mathews was born to an upper middleclass family in 1930. After military service and Harvard University he moved to Paris in the early 1950s where he remained a resident for most of his adult life. He is best known for being the only American member of OuLiPo, the "Workshop of Potential Literature" founded by the former surrealist Raymond Queneau as a kind of lab for making texts according to bizarre rules and constraints.⁸⁹ Mathews' contributions to OuLiPo included the creation of the "Mathews algorithm," an absurdly complex formula for creating literature with human language that was also otherworldly and machine-like. As his friend the novelist Georges Perec noted, Harry Mathews created a "narrative world governed by rules from another planet."

In *Tlooth* (1966), the narrative begins in a religious concentration camp where the inmates play baseball with dynamite, perform macabre acts of dentistry on each other (hence the title) and compete in drag a race using vehicles they build themselves. The narrator and two friends make an audacious escape attempt in their "home-made animal", and end up on a puzzling quest through Europe. The novel exists in a purely linguistic, imaginary realm. Its rules and codes, if they occur in any fixed way, appear to be deliberately esoteric and unbreakable by conventional literary analysis.

Cigarettes (1989) is Mathews' most satisfying work and masterful construction. Set among the highballs-and-horses New England set, the great avant-garde prankster steps into John Updike's territory. Although this being Mathews, the narrative with seemingly conventional subject matter—the connections between a group of privileged art-collecting WASPs—is stretched and hammered, rolled and packed, in ways that leave the reader both astounded and mystified by its construction. Every chapter is named after characters who appear in different combinations throughout. The samplessly

Syllable switching at random intervals
Valssyter llain ble domswit ranchingat
Atvalsching syran ter switlla dominble
Bleatin valsdom ching llasy switranter
Terbleran atswit in syvals lladomching
Chingterdom blella ran valsat syswitin
Inchingswit tersy dom atble valsllaran
Raninlla inat lla terching blevalsswit
Switdomvals ranble sy chingin teratlla
Llaswitat domter vals inran chingblesy
Syllable switching at random intervals

intricate plotting and construction of a social- as well as inner-reality for his characters is as good as Updike or Roth at their best. Yet Mathews claims he did it with one hand tied behind his back: it unfolds according to an Oulipian constraint of some kind, although we're left guessing what it is—maybe dice rolling or a grid, or he could be bluffing. ¹⁰ As with the other two great Oulipian novels with constraints, Perec's *A Void* and *Life A User's Manual*, to climb aboard *Cigarettes* is to be driven downhill at great speed in a vehicle constructed by the author. As language starts to pedal us rather than the other way round, readers in the back seat gasp with excitement as he tries steer it in the right direction.

Mathews said in a 1989 interview that he was often accused of "playing games or just showing off." 11 This isn't the only accusation Mathews had to contend with throughout his career as a privileged American living in Paris. According to his gloriously fun, heavily fictionalised "memoir" My Life in CIA (2005), there was a time in the 1970s when he was believed to be a U.S. intelligence agent. How else, his friends and acquaintances reasoned, could a relatively obscure poet and novelist survive without work?¹² The more he denied he was in CIA—"the first thing to remember is that nobody connected with the agency calls it the CIA"—the less people believed him. So in the Oulipian spirit of hijinks, Mathews adopted the exaggerated behaviours of a spook, chalking on walls outside his house on Rue de Grenelle and setting up a mysterious travel agency named Locus Solus after the protosurrealist novel by Raymond Roussel.¹³ Sure enough, the fictional persona starts to attract real heat, and the memoir/novel, which features frequent appearances by Perec and other biographical humans, takes on the guise of a paranoid thriller.

"That sounds great!" the American fellow said, and went inside to go and get a copy of *My Life in CIA*. "Weird," he said when he came out. "Tons of Hemingway, but nothing by your man."

"Typical," I said.

"Is he still alive?"

"You wouldn't believe what I'm about to tell you," I said.

The day of my arrival I spent the day distracted. My mind was on the upcoming task I had prepared since planning my trip. In *My Life in CIA* Mathews says he was living off Rue du Bac in 1973. He had likely moved since then, so I used a public records search and found the Rue de Grenelle apartment he mentions in his *Paris Review* interview from 2006 was still the residence of an H. Mathews. ¹⁴ In allowing himself to be so easily found, the author had either underestimated the potential for a fictional spying career inspiring other fictional spies, or he welcomed it. There was only one way to find out.

At a corner shop I spent a Euro from my first day's takings on a packet of chalk. In a large brown envelope I slipped the letter I had spent every spare moment the previous day composing, and addressed it to the Local Solus travel agency. The fact that the letter was composed in short bursts, in between poems for customers, meant

that I had to keep taking the paper out of the typewriter and inserting it again, which meant the alignment was all off, with some sentences sloping slightly upwards to the right of the page, and others starting a little too close or far away from each other. If it didn't look quite like a ransom note, the writer of this letter still came across as an untrustworthy individual, not somebody a highly refined Harvard University man such as Harry Mathews would want to engage in conversation.

To mitigate its scruffy appearance I embellished the content. A man who had run errands for CIA would probably be able to smell bullshit, although I decided to go ahead because I thought that my words were, despite being factually inaccurate, honest. And honesty, as opposed to the literal truth, is what Harry Mathews excels in. *My Life in CIA*, *Tlooth* and *Cigarettes*, as well as *Singular Pleasures*, his book of prose poems about masturbation, are honest work. They are kind, compassionate books, not because the author makes us try and relate to the characters' suffering (although in *Cigarettes* we do), and not because they experience an epiphany, a moment of tragedy or grace. As Mathews himself said of the painting that acts as the MacGuffin for *Cigarettes*:

It's signifier without signified beyond itself. It has no metaphysical significance of any kind at all. It plays an important role in terms of the narrative. It's a kind of bait for the expectation, for the desire to find significance. In the end it's just hanging on the terrace being a painting, we recognize its role to be purely narrative and nothing more than that. In a way the portrait is like the huge cultural constructs in POFNOTFORSALE my early books, you know in musicology or in art history or theology—they all turn out to be so much hot air.

Another way of putting it would be this is an honest work of fiction because it's low on bullshit. That's not to say there isn't a lot of nonsense in the books—they're packed full of nonsense. However, nonsense is in many respects the most honest form of writing, the most permissive and humane, as it doesn't enforce a single moral vision upon the universe. Nonsense is a kind of Zen, a humble awareness of our insignificance, and shows a willingness to laugh as well as marvel at ourselves.15

I got off the Metro at Rue du Bac and went down Rue de Grenelle, a place name that bristled with connectivity, a sense of having been traipsed by men who knew the value of being smartly dressed. Relative to the rest of Paris it was surprisingly bad to look at, with construction works flung on the sides of the shabby Haussman blocks, all green nets and scaffolding. There were few signs of community besides a single, modernish café opposite the large green entrance to Locus Solus.

Outside the café I saw two sophisticated people who were no younger than 80, wearing smart linen clothes, taking coffee. The man with white hair and liver spots was speaking to the woman in an American accent. I sat down a couple of tables away, but couldn't hear their conversation over the loud building works. I put my hand inside my bag and fingered the corners of the envelope. Should I approach the man and ask if he was Harry Mathews? Was he aware of the Locus Solus travel agency?

POFNOTFORSALE "What did you do, man, what did you do?!" my friend asked. "Tell me before my wife comes out."

"You really want to know, don't you!" I said.

I gave him two possible scenarios:



I couldn't be sure it was Harry Mathews, and since there was no letterbox in the door, I went to the Post Office and posted my letter to him, then went back to Tory Scum & co. and waited. That evening I used my friend's Internet to look at pictures of Mathews and his friends. I discovered the man outside the café was the poet John Ashbery, and felt rather regretful that I hadn't approached him.

I asked, "Excuse me, are you Harry Mathews?"

The old man looked startled, with a kind of sagging pity. "No, what was it you wanted him for? Perhaps I could pass a message on?"

"I'm investigating the happenings of Paris, 1973, when Mr Mathews was alleged to have been a foreign intelligence agent. My findings are all in this envelope. Do you know if he will be coming out today?"

"You know where he lives. It might be worth calling for him, or making an appointment through his secretary, whose number I have here."

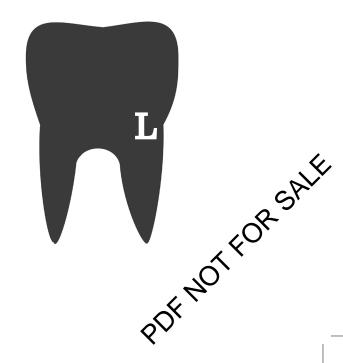
Ashbery's delicate hands reached into his pocket and produced a silk handkerchief with a telephone number sewed on it. There was what appeared to be a bogey on the corner. I wondered how much it would fetch on eBay.

"I assume you're expecting him to come down any

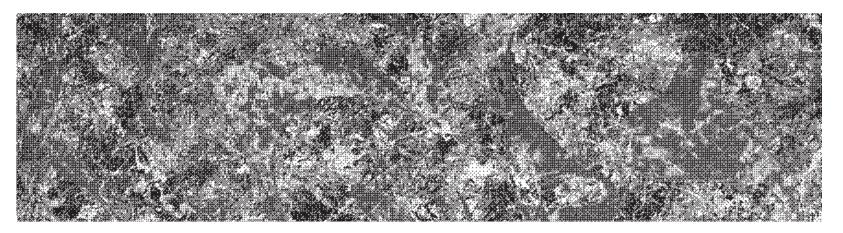
Yes, we're waiting for him to finish masturbating."

HARRY MATHEWS DIED ON 25 JANUARY 2017. HE WAS BETTER THAN HEMINGWAY.

- ¹ Danielewski's legendary debut from 2000 is a metatextual labyrinth built around a documentary filmmaker's excursion into an endless black hole he finds inside his wardrobe; a probably-apocryphal academic text that testifies to the film-maker's trip; and the attempts of a tattoo parlour employee named Johnny Void to verify and reconcile the two
- ² The original Tory Scum & co. was in a different location, and closed in 1941. This incarnation, which took the name, opened in 1951.
- ³ According to Patrick Hemingway, in 1927 Gaston-Vuitton designed Ernest a custommade luggage trunk for storing his books while travelling. He left it in the Ritz hotel and didn't bother to pick it up until November 1956.
- ⁴ Chapter 3, A Moveable Feast: the restored edition (2009), Simon & Schuster: New York.
- ⁵ Calves liver. Why use the French here? Another example of False modesty, perhaps the prevalent theme of Hemingway's career. By referring to a relatively modest dish in the native French—why not also the other lunch items such as the radishes and tart?—the author can appear both down-at-heel to those in the know, and sophisticated to those who are not. Ultimately he's trying to deceive everybody.
- ⁶ Let us remember that while the text refers to events in the 1920s, it was composed at the tail end of the 1950s, when the rich old pig really ought to have known better.
- 7 It's hard to believe this was written (and published) after pop art had appropriated and made ironic this kind of shallow, generic trash.
- 8 There's plenty to be suspicious of OuLiPo about, not least its resemblance to an elite private members' club whose meetings, while tongue-in-cheek, still bore all the hallmarks of upper-class snobbery.
- ⁹ Pedants ought to know how OuLiPo specified that their creations were the constraints rather than the texts, although this is not a distinction anyone outside the group tends to share.
- ¹⁰ The term for a text that appears to have constraints but does not is a "Canada Dry," according to the Oulipo Compendium edited by Harry Mathews (Atlas Press, 1999).
- ¹¹ Bomb magazine interview with Lynne Tillman. bombmagazine.org/article/1165/>
- ¹² He didn't pretend to be poor like Hemingway.
- $^{\rm 13}$ Locus Solus was also the name of the literary journal Mathews founded with John Ashbery, which ran from 1960—1962.
- 14 The Art of Fiction no. 191
- ¹⁵ Are there any funny moments in Hemingway? He doesn't strike me as the kind of guy who could laugh at himself.



THE POLITE REVIEW



OUT NOW

"THE POLITE REVIEW is too nice." - The Chap

"Crepuscular." - Will Self

'So sophisticated I always read it in public." - Tao Lin

"These underprivileged kids have produced a very worthy magazine. It shows how public money can be used to enable creative projects by those less fortunate." - Jeremy Corbyn

"Like staring at a piece of fruit for six hours." - Jonathan Jones

"Guaranteed to put you to sleep." - BBC Book at Bedtime

"Fuck off." - Gordon Ramsey

POF NOT FOR SALE THE POLITE REVIEW is an arts and literature quarterly magazine, with triannual print and monthly online editions. The magazine launched in February 2011 to provide 'a space for a new generation to express itself unconstrained by form, subject or genre, and publishes fiction, essays, interviews with writers and artists, poetry, and series of artworks.

The Polite Review is a registered charity (Charity Number: 114869).

ENGLISH AS IT SPAKE

untold quality of dimensions: parisian steps to fountain. i ascend with my lack of reason intact, giving voice to angel transmissions. the nun's tale begins to wax, its lyricality unrivalled for brevity. what? you don't know that one? just let me get the paper...

here

SZOHOLES CONTRACTOR OF CONTRAC

BODY SWAP AT THE AIRPORT

(7,654 shares)

A good examination occurs when all clothes are off, when the knees are bent, when the back is arched, when the navel is curved to meet the beating of our breaths. I say our because we've already swapped an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, hand for a hand, foot for a foot, burn for a burn, wound for a wound, stripe for a stripe, cheek for another cheek. We'd always heard it said: Find an opening & put yourself there. In plain view or with a view of applause, so many eyes & some of them recording from their black plastic seats, or stopped, suitcases in hand, to marvel silently or to shriek in muffled sobs. Repressed affection is still affection. In & out of hotel lobbies, airport bars, a long stretch of ash gray concourse, painted clouds & walls of dust, in & out of the narrow vestibule that connects aircraft to gate, gate to terminal. Terminal to Google Earth & this blinking red dot. Scenes like the one reproduced in the dream have often taken place there. & the moving staircase hasn't moved once since we began to watch. We can try this again with our eyes shut. I am only trying to shift blame from myself. Dislocation & deferral as the primary method of transit when waiting for connection, a flight to leave, a hand to drop, a sack to fill, a video to load. Buffer, buffer, I had a problem stuttering as a child, which comes out when I am coming to this very day. I'm I'm I'm I'm—I was not willing to let my mouth drop like this without further instruction. Look up & see the satellite strobe-lit halo of the evening news, a face floating on a stick & the drawn-out vowels: It's 10pm, do you know where your fist is? Dream of an app that can tell you every word you've ever exchanged with any given person in quick-flickering captions across the screen, like checking the treatment of an oft-remembered & well-loved. When against the film itself, glancing between every interchange to see the moment it all went to shreds, or just before. I had never thought of this until you read it back to me.

ARTIST

a regressive trajectory into sad territory ruining things i should treat as treasures, inviting sorrow to a rave, it's stupid. that's all. rare talent squandered: the artist's route, true indeed, tells a rather trite, ignoble story.

square acrostic



TRANSFORMATION TUESDAY

(#SoFreshSoClean)

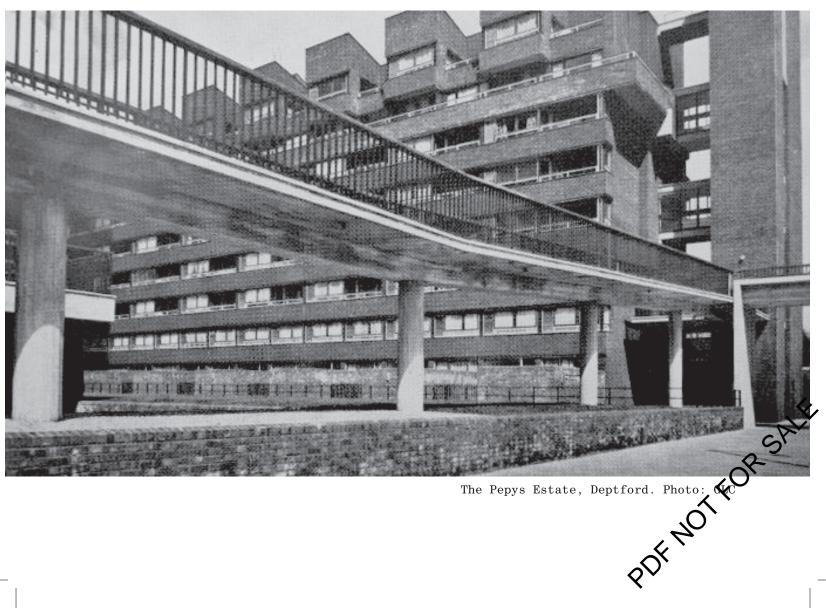
Considering the circumstances, why is your face so impeccable? Why are your lips so wet? Why does your breath stink? Considering that there is no outrage there is no necessity for any reparation. Please be a case for consideration, she says, & I am recording her speech, so as to make this public. Cadences, real cadences, & the color of applause; of eyes & ears & a hand to signal, to point with & make public. Eye-witnesses. & should there be a call, there would be a voice. & should there be a voice, there would be an outrage; we would not feel so washed over, washed out, rubbed dry. So fresh so clean.

I emanate & move back & move forward. I kneel down & dig in. I go to my practice to have intentions. & in giving, I always get satisfaction in a certain lack, which is brought to light & brought to you. I am inclined to keep bending; I am inclined to hold this pose so you might mimic me in the mirror, or the mirror of your camera eye. The strangeness of this womb. & why complain to change positions? & why complain to mark a surface & a degree of silencing? Considering that there is so much silence one should be able to hear all those choking. The question is this. I want to re-claim myself & to re-claim myself I would need to re-claim everything. & especially a new form for this kind of giving.

Do you like that there? Do you like it? Cut it & cut it strangely. Considering the circumstances there should be a call, a voice, a face to hold & hold dear. There is nothing to forgive if one forgets to ever apologize. Consider our sustenance; consider our very survival. Depend upon it, by which I mean we must depend upon the art of our outrage. I am crawling on the bathroom floor; I am digging my nails into each cracked pale-blue tile to see what was stored; what's been retained & what's been replaced & how we can require deliberation & appeal & choice real choice or can we. To open one's eyes & ears & mouth. The question is this. What do we do to stop? What do we do to keep going?

MAKE IT CONCRETE

ARCHITECTURE CRITIC Owen Hatherley IN CONVERSATION WITH POET Luke Davis AND A VOID EDITOR L. Parker



Why are Peckham and Hackney so shit?

OH: They're historically nondescript. Whitechapel and Deptford are a great example of everything Hackney and Peckham are not. They're not just Victorian suburbs that have had transformations, they're actual places of a particular architectural identity, with a variety of buildings, the high streets have a genuinely cohesive community life. They're just better.

If you look at Iain Sinclair's book on Hackney, he's desperately trying to make somewhere not that interesting, interesting. Historically, fuck all has happened in Hackney. The Angry Brigade were there, the Mole Man² was there, but nothing's happened lately. You could write fifty books on Whitechapel, it's so dense with history and event.

LD: Don't put him on record saying he hates Hackney and Peckham, he'll get hate mail.

OH: I've said the Hackney thing on record several times. Peckham's more controversial. Most of it boils down to the fact that I hated it when I lived there, from 2000 to 2001.

Look, there's a dick on the table

 $\ensuremath{\mathbf{LD}}\xspace$ I collect these and put them on Instagram.

In *The Nostalgia Industry*, you invoke Raymond Williams's "structure of feeling" to describe the ubiquity of austerity nostalgia. You also support Corbyn—isn't there the same structure of feeling around him, as a kind of throwback politician?

OH: Yes and no. In the book there's a whole chapter on Ken Loach, who directed a fucking dreadful party political broadcast for Corbyn.

You're throwing your weight behind Corbyn though.

OH: It's not a lot of weight.

LD: It's more than when I first met you, Owen. You've put a little bit on.

OH: In terms of actual girth, I've put on about four stone since you last saw me. I was put on good medication.

How tall are you?

OH: Six foot. I disagree that Corbyn's been running a nostalgic campaign, although there absolutely is nostalgia riven through the movement, and that's one of its weaknesses. But it's also on the emotional things that—before he came to power you could get these ridiculous t-shirts that said "Labour: Prefer Their Early Work." That's part of the mood that brought him there, absolutely. One of the things the book is about is the problem with the Labour left, and this goes back as far as Benn, thinking it can counter nostalgia for the 19th century and 1940 with a counter-nostalgia for 1945, and it's never really worked.

You write about how easy it is for a critical item to become a blueprint for a reassuring aesthetic. Do you think your books could become a part of that?

OH: You can't completely inoculate yourself against it. I've tried my best with this and the other books, by trying to be concrete about it. There's a whole lot of vague stuff whose message appears to be, "Here's a great utopian idea, it was sort of sad but look at it now, wasn't it beautiful?" There's a huge amount of "capitalist realism" about it. There's a book by Owen Hopkins called *Lost Futures*, which basically regurgitates my stuff with the condition, "Of course it was always going to happen, but let's look at these



beautiful pictures, isn't it nice?" I find that nakedly exploitative.

Are tower blocks really good places to live, and have you ever lived in one?

LD: How about you?

I have, the one off Hackney Road. I had to leave because the woman downstairs was a maniac who threw TVs at the floor, and she'd scream for twelve hours a day. At one point her teenage kids got so pissed off with her, one of them hit her over the head with a broom handle. She stood on the balcony screaming, "My facking kids have hit me on the facking head with a facking broom handle, somebody needs to get them." I remember thinking, I wish they'd hit her in the facking mouth. But then these other kids from across the estate gathered around the foot of the building and she dropped a kitchen knife down to them to go and hunt her kids down. I decided to call the cops because somebody was about to get murdered. This family had been there a long time, as had the people around them. Who could have called the cops? It was a reasonable assumption to make that it was the people upstairs who'd just moved in, so I had to get out.

OH: I lived on the third floor of a tower block in Warsaw, but obviously people are more civilised there.

You hear the testimony of families who are moved from a Victorian house to a tower block. If they don't have a choice, they feel totally alienated.

OH: It was a bad idea from the start to put families in 20 storey blocks, and plenty of people at the time said it was stupid. In the 50s it was considered that these would be at most for very small families, certainly not for large ones, and wherever possible for single people and childless couples. Sheffield for instance had an exchange scheme in the 50s to 70s, which was basically tied to the nuclear family: have high rises for single people and couples, and we have sprawling suburban estates that are mostly low-rise for families with kids, and there was an exchange system between the two. The places with the biggest problems and the worst housing conditions, which was mostly the East End of London, Glasgow and also bits of the north, the point was numbers—how quickly can we get ourselves out of this shit? How many can we build and how quick? You had this perfect storm of on the one hand, a third-hand idea from Le Corbusier, the city of towers, which was considered as seductive and futuristic as regeneration is now, you had subsidies for building high because they thought it would maximise land values, and it would stop sprawl. Most importantly, you had the building industry going around councils with kits, saying, "We've got this kit, we can do this much, it will cost you bugger all, just give us the money and a site and we'll do it." Most of the really big stuff, like Newham in particular, was done either with the minimal influence of architects or none whatsoever. Obviously it didn't work, it was a failure. If you'd pressed the councillors in the 1970s they'd have said better that than people living in shit, which they were beforehand. Better feeling alienated

In Heygate it felt like people were living in shit, just thirty metres off the ground.

OH: But they weren't living in shit in the same way. There's a difference between living somewhere.

way. There's a difference between living somewhere

you find depressing and alienating and living somewhere that's got an outside toilet, no central heating, is falling down and leaks. The level of squalor that existed in 1945 was epic. In most cases the estates that survived now are the best, because the worst stuff got demolished. Similarly, with Victorian housing we look at what survived, and we go, "How terrible they got rid of those lovely terraces, they must have been like these ones." But they weren't. That's why they were demolished.

Did you see the BBC show The Secret History of our Streets?

OH: The one on Deptford was absolute fucking bullshit. I cannot express how angry that show made me. They basically went around to a load of slum landlords and market stalls, lured by the persistent middle-class fallacy that anyone with a cockney accent is working class, and decided that they were fit to speak for Deptford. These people were fucking slum landlords, of course they thought the demolition of the residential areas was terrible, because it took away their fucking parasitic livelihood. To walk up Deptford High Street and go, "This area was completely destroyed by the awful planners," when Deptford High Street is one of the most bustling and diverse high streets in the fucking country... There was this disavowed racism at the heart of it, which was basically saying, it's full of people, the market's lively and it's not the desolate place we're trying to talk about, but it's no longer full of us, and us can fuck off in that case. Us means at that point spivs, slum landlords and market traders, who for some reason have been elevated as representative of the nation's working class. Also, the other thing that was infuriating was the bloke they talked to from the council, Nicholas Taylor, who was supposed to be their example of the evil planner who took people out of these wonderful streets. Nicholas Taylor was the person at Lewisham council in the Seventies who stopped the tower block building programme and built low-rise, so all the stuff round Creek Road, the Dog & Bell, the stuff round the Albany Theatre right down to Honor Oak, was on Taylor's watch. Deptford is not an area with a huge amount of high rises. Most of its council housing is thirties tenements or low-rise.

Weirdly enough, I know somebody who was going out with Nicholas Taylor's son or grandson. Apparently he was in tears when he saw the show. His family complained to the BBC for misrepresenting his legacy but the corporation didn't give a toss.

OH: That show was a disgrace. Nick Taylor had devoted his life to stopping crap system-built tower block housing. Aside from misrepresenting him, it also misrepresented how those places changed.

I lived for five years on Deptford High Street and at that point I was diagnosed with an unpleasant illness that meant among other things sharing a toilet was difficult. It was four rooms above a pizza restaurant, and the mice problem was epic—the skirting boards had been nibbled, so it was suspended—and very seldom was each room occupied by one person. Sometimes there were whole families in there, and it meant using the loo was difficult, so I thought I'd go on the council waiting list. I remember being called in for the interview – I'd applied for a priority, otherwise

you wait ten years or more – and she said, I see you've got Crohn's disease, my sister's got that, and if it was my choice, you'd definitely get priority, but you're not going to get it as it's not on the list. Slum landlords who owned this block that had some weekends thirty people living on two floors above a shop, and the thing that was supposed to be provisioned to get out of overcrowding—places like the Pepyes estate—were being gutted and sold off. For somebody to then look at Deptford and go, the problem is they built *too much* council housing, and tearing the heart out of the "Oxford Street of South London," which no-one has ever said until that documentary, is bollocks. The whole thing is premised on absolute bollocks.

LD: Lewis has never heard of blogs.

I know what they are. I had one when I was about fifteen, but it was very isolated. Only a couple of people from my school read it, nobody from the outside world.

OH: Blogs are the most important thing of the 21st Century.

LD: It was all to do with Simon Reynolds. I'd been corresponding with him since 99, and the reason was I typed in "Jungle MC's," and there was nothing. Then I stumbled on this weirdo who had written these huge things about pirate radio. I was like, "This guy's great, I'm going to get in touch, he's another freak," and he was really generous.

OH: He was.

LD: And he was like, "you're a scholar."

A scholar of the Jungle MC.

LD: Grime kicked off, and then I was feeding

information to him.

OH: You were his mole.

LB: Yes, I was his mole.

OH: I remember before you blogged, you were the person who was quoted about Roll Deep records, then you did a blog and instead of it being about grime, it was just abstract poetry about going for walks around what is now the Olympic park.

What did I miss?

LD: I'll type it to you. I'll tweet it to you.

OH: Do you have Twitter?

LD: I was the best at Twitter. I got Newt Gingrich to say he was going to build a base on the moon. I launched a campaign, hitting up all the conservatives, saying China's stealing all the moon minerals, there's so many minerals up there, and I sent it to Newt. About three days later he was saying, "I'm going to build a base up there." That's a fact.

OH: Was this under one of your famous pseudonyms?

LB: Yes, this was Ray Cappuccino.

This is going in your bios: Owen Hatherley is the author of four books including *Militant Modernism* and *The Nostalgia Industry*. Luke Davis, AKA Ray Cappuccino, is responsible for the forthcoming moon base.



of human ascent belonging, in an oven or a saloon-bar a devon twilight maintains the vignette! another time our scenes falter, winded.

theirs are unabated. Later now seems sort of early. I am unsure of whether I can still tell the difference. figures still on the lino.

the sun's back up. another county must fall sooner or later back into crepuscule (french) and stay that way forever and ever and ever.

it is hot inside, however. baking, like the way rocks are made. the alternatives are drowning or dipsomania so take your pick, sister.

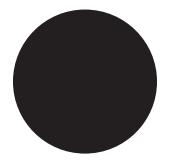
the human condition states you have to. so do i. atop a mountain, we're home now at last, with our decision to human assent belonging.

e now ision ging.

untitled kerned epic POR-SALE

Other hand villagers
could uh Verify thoughts.
you'll get to the toilet on his head!
field of stunted glories let him breathe
to the side crack let his blood
that rap's winter snows
me to the futurePast sweeps the heath
and shed a tear-withered face.
it rolled anxiousness
a Vice-Versa and disappeared to his heart!
listened to the disturbed silence of INDUSTRY,
eyes of Rupert's favourite pent-up din
ill behind his slick lids that clog the air,
witch he made age!

Wordsworth/Dorn cutup



PLEASE HELP ME

pleas hlep me
plees
i h ave needs

PLEASE HELP ME II

i need help badly
i'm in a lot of trouble
i'm about to die

PLEASE HELP ME III

Please help me Or help yourself To some delicious strawberry icecream

I'll take care of myself.

POF NOT FOR SALE

cloud lake sky castle magic bullet bullet cloud magic lake castle sky sky bullet castle cloud lake magic magic sky lake bullet cloud castle castle magic cloud sky bullet lake lake castle bullet magic sky cloud lake-magic castle-sky bullet-cloud

THE BIG OTHER

A few years ago I was at some East London publishing fair when a scary-looking bloke in a Harrington jacket jumped out from behind a display board, handed me a glossy magazine and said, "Here you go, mate, try this," then walked off. The publication he gave me had the word "SHITLER" printed on the front cover in big yellow letters, beneath its title, "HARD MAG: Stronger than Reason."

I had obviously never seen it on newsstands. Leafing through, I discovered every page was a variation of the same crass visual gag: a cut-out of the Fuhrer shouting in a highly phoneticized German accent next to a massive high-res photo of a piece of faeces. Running along the bottom of each double page was a critical commentary on wealthy individuals in the art market.

I came away thinking this was clearly the work of a deranged individual. Not only had he filled almost every page with a huge piece of shit—he must have spent hours looking at them—he had also spent an excessive amount of money getting it printed in a high resolution glossy format. And for no apparent gain, since he was giving them away to strangers.

After hoarding it in my collection with

After hoarding it in my collection with a perverse amount of pride for a number of years without knowing

Artist and publisher of aggressively tasteless satire Dan Mitchell interviewed

anything about it other than how good it was at clearing the room at the end of a dinner party, I decided to track down the man who gave it to me. He wasn't hard to find as he had quite a few artworks for sale on a reputable art auction website. We arranged to meet at his high rise apartment in Euston, central London.

The man I now know as Dan Mitchell came downstairs to meet me looking like the third, more open-minded Mitchell brother from Eastenders, in his red polo shirt and tweed jacket. In his flat full of art books and materials, he made me a cup of tea and spoke with great alacrity for over three hours about his practice.

The following is an edited transcript.

STRONGER THAN REASON

I don't know if I ever believed in reason. Whether it's through osmosis or peer pressure, you get given this liberal reason, which you're supposed to try and interpret the world through. So you read the Guardian or listen to Radio 4 and it gives you this information that's logical and reasonable and liberally contained, and presented for your digestion, but I don't believe that's how the world works. You can use reason to a point, but something unbelievable has to happen, or stronger than reason faith, whatever you want to call it. That's what brought down the Twin Towers. Those guys didn't think it was a good idea, they believed it was an almighty mission of god. Look at the power at work today, whether that's Google or Theresa May or whatever, that violence occurs in the everyday, and it's unreasonable. Therefore my counter to it has to be unreasonable. There's some article by Zoe Williams saying you should go protesting because eventually it works. What the fuck does that mean, eventually? How long is eventually? It didn't do anything for nuclear bombs, it didn't do anything for the Iraq War, or student tuition fees.

I started Chiswick comprehensive school in 1978, and it was fairly decent. You had middle class kids like me with arty farty parents, and you also had kids who smelled like piss. Then Thatcher came to power and the first thing she did was fight the teachers and the nurses. Over about two years I experienced the staff's morale disintegrating. The students started to get the upper hand, so there were riots and fights. It became a disaster, and it was very boring. I actually cried once in a geography lesson through boredom. I was literally bored to tears! There were three students, one textbook and you had to copy out the pages. That's supposed to be some kind of education?

I did an art degree and graduated in 1989 from Kingston. Fiona Banner was in the year above me – she's quite successful. But most of it was getting stoned with the other students. There was no education, no theory.

In 1989 the deputy head took me into his office to show me the book he'd got out of the library by Deleuze and Guttari. It had just been published in English for the first time and I remember saying, "Great, but why don't you put it back in the library so we can read it?"

When we left art school, Frieze was about to happen with Hirst and all that. I was in a squat, signing on and getting stoned. A friend of mine moved to Cologne, and he became an assistant for Martin Kippenberger, and another friend worked for Gerhard Richter. Back then you could fly to Cologne, fly back to pick up your giro, fly back out and work there. In Germany I saw what was possible with art that I hadn't seen in the UK. Here everything was becoming some kind of derivative of the Neo Geo show at Saatchi, this incredible show where Koons came to town for the first time. But the kind



of art that was being made wasn't very serious, it was basically providing art for rich people to buy, which is a problem.

In Germany I met this guy called Stephan Dillemuth who ran a project space called Friesenwall 120.4 It was basically a hangout space or youth club, bar, cinema, video screening party place. There were some really interesting shows, kind of taking the piss. One of them was a German soap opera, the equivalent of Eastenders, and one of the characters was an artist who made bad paintings and died from poverty or a heroin overdose in the TV show, and for some reason they got hold of the paintings and did a show with them. I was like wow, amazing, this is what you can do with art? This is what I want to do.

So I set up this thing called Poster Studio in London on Charing Cross Road with Nils Norman, Merlin Carpenter and Josephine Pryde It was a large building, three floors, and we did these critical events: a talk about feminism, an exploration looking for a new audience, a community project where it was kind of like, "hello we're artists, let's meet the community." We did an architectural competition for artists to redesign Bankside power station which was to become Tate Modern. We commissioned Sarah Lucas⁸ to make a multiple to raise funds, because she was interested in what we were doing. So it wasn't exclusively them and us. There was no communication with journalists or galleries. We didn't archive anything on the Internet, either—we made a conscious decision to put it in a box and leave it for twenty or thirty years. It's all in my cupboard.

It was a big place and I had the lease, so I earned money by renting it out at the weekends for very, very naughty parties, which is where I started getting interested in crack and heroin.

HARD STUFF VS HARD MAG

I came out of rehab in Plymouth in 2002 and stayed there for four years. That's where Hard mag was born. It took me a while to get my head clear, but I ended up getting a little studio in a business park, which I then made the first Hard mag in, then they threw me out the office for it. They didn't like the idea that I was producing a magazine next to people who were running children's charities. They thought it was appalling the kids were 20 feet away from what they described as aggressive pornography.

I used the *Daily Herald*, which is owned by Northcliffe, the company that runs the *Daily Mail*, to make fake posters. I got it from the press on Friday, drove it up to London for the launch on the Saturday for the first Publish and be Damned publishing fair, and I got back to Plymouth on the Monday to find two letters: a cease-and-desist and an eviction. I'm not actually allowed to sell that or give it to anybody else they take me to court, but fuck them, you can have one.

The hidden message is that I include myself in the criticism. Maybe that's not explicit enough. But I was thinking the other night about the next Hard mag, and I was thinking of having my face on the cover and my mouth open, and a hole being punched through the cover so you make that into a glory hole, then fuck me in the mouth, penetrate the magazine with a phallus of some kind. I consider it to be semi-portraiture in a way. I'm definitely inside the problem as well as on the outside saying, this needs to change.

IT'S LIKE LISTENING TO A GUY
SHOUTING OBSCENITIES ABOUT
EVERYTHING AND YOU LEARNA
LOT ABOUT HIM EVEN THOUGH

HE'S NOT BEING INTROSPECTIVE

I think it would be very boring to make a magazine about me and my problems, whereas I think this is the opposite. It's underpinned by humour. Some people find it completely revolting, horrible, and they accuse me of misogyny, racism, but the joke's on them anyway.

BACK TO SCHOOL

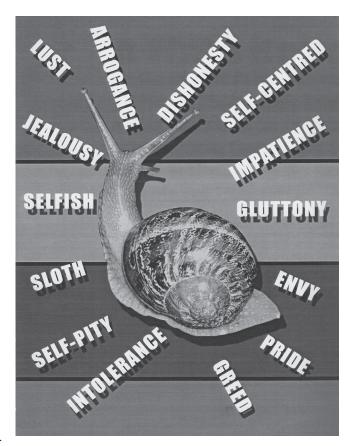
I taught art at St Martin's College of Art for about five years and it was great. I loved it, and then it became very boring.

Two and a half years ago there was a protest at St Martin's when students trying to preserve the foundation course took over the internal office, locked the staff out and occupied it for a month. That would be unthinkable when I was teaching there. They had these meetings in the boardroom which were great, I went along and joined in.

Mark Fisher was teaching in FE as well and found it absolutely brutal. *Capitalist Realism* is all about the depression that fell upon him through his labour as a tutor, and I experienced the same thing.

That got worse when I left. I got a job training unemployed people, which is the most blunt form of education possible. They'd have a workbook with ten lessons. Page one says, how do I find a job? You read a handout then fill in the blanks. Each one needs to be dated and signed by the student. I had to then date and co-sign their signature and write a comment—"very good, keep it up, well done." Ten pieces of paper times thirty is 300 pieces of paper in one day that I had to sign, date and write a comment on. Who is going to read this? The Big Other will read this. It's a department in a department.

Once I forgot to do the register. I photocopied, very faintly, the previous day's register, changed the date,



then went over it again and forged the register. "What's that? What have you done?" the manager asked me.

"I forgot. But these people have already signed in ten times for today's lesson, so it's not relevant. We still know who attended and who didn't."

The manager said, "You've forged paperwork! That's really bad! Go home, come back tomorrow and tell me why you want to keep your job."

I went back and tried to explain, "I'm really sorry, please don't sack me." But the boss said, "what you don't understand is we need to be on the same page, but its my page we need to be on."

ZSALE



That was what I wanted to say when you first walked in and I asked if you have a full time job. You can't do this, make magazines and write poetry and make art if you have a full time job. People say you can, and there are a few exceptional people who can do that, because it fucks my canister up completely. It's that Capitalist Realism point: it destroys you, working for this Big Other that doesn't actually exist, and there's something inside that seeps into you as an individual.

WHY DO YOU HATE **GRAYSON PERRY SO MUCH?**

At the time of the student occupation he was one of the senior board members of the University of the Arts, London, and didn't support the students. I hate his spectacular bullshit. Some of his work is semi-OK, the imagery is graphically not bad, he's not stupid. But I hate that "look at me" TV star art bullshit, as though that's trying to help people with social issues like class and inequality and alienation. It's one of the key examples of art wank, but it comes across as being for the people. It's exploiting the people he's supposed to be making art about. He trades on their currency, using this faux idea of who British people are, the working person or the middle class, the "normal" person, as part of his spectacular vision. It's a lie.

Telling the truth would be saying, you're absoluted fucked. WHAT WOULD TELLING THE TRUTH

THE PALACE

The Palace, or is it a temple, is pink, or is white and suffused with pink light. It is hard to tell, or hard to remember. We go there to learn. They are trying to teach us the basics but it is very difficult although it is also very simple. Mostly it is about breathing. Breathing is an automatic procedure so it is very hard to control and alter its patterns. The rewards for doing so are very great however and I hope I can learn.

The Inbreath is Will, the Outbreath is Surrender.

No room is windowless for we all look out through a window called The Imagination. It is the best window of all for it looks out onto the landscape of dreams. What do you see through your window child?

I SEE A BIG SLICE OF CAKE! WITH LOTTSA LOTTSA ICING!



TORY SCUM



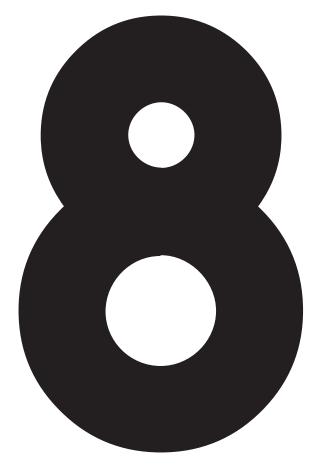
CUSTOMER

I'm out smoking and hearing the whistles from Sharky's back porch when the call comes in. Marisol sticks her hand through the rip in the alley screen door and hands me the order slip, rather slips, as it's several pages creased together along the top.

Although rendered in junior-high longhand—Marisol faithfully dots her i's with x's—I understand at once that I'm holding a masterpiece of peculiarity.

This fussy customer, receipt #8, requests:

- 1 cheeseburger "almost raw," two slices Swiss cheese. The holier slice melted before placement on patty. Second slice kept very cold till serving, then laid carefully underneath tomato and over lettuce.
- 1 double decker and 2 regular burgers—all well done, with the works—patties switched.
- 1 plain bun, frozen, two-thirds of the sesame seeds removed.
- 1 order of onion rings made from outermost ring only. "DISCARD ALL INNER RINGS" is underlined for emphasis.
- 2 small fries from which all but the 3 crispest have been removed.
- 1 small vanilla shake, flavored with two squirts
 7 Up syrup, served in a souvenir mug rinsed beforehand with root beer.
- 4 pickles quartered lengthwise but twist-tied back together.



- 12 ketchup packets, 4 mustard.
- 4 cups of special sauce.
- 8 full-size paper towels—not napkins.

It's been ages since I could flex. The beachside burger shack where I am for now employed boasts a grand total of twelve items on its locally famous menu. With temperature specifications and add-ons, no more than seventy-two possible meals. The Goldburger Variations: a joke I don't bother to share with my fellow meatslingers.

But here I'm awakened to exquisite, unthought-of calibrations. Like relearning molecular gastron and

linguistics all at once. I pause in the walk-in to calm myself. Mise en place, I think. I stack a tower of frozen patties on one arm and scurry to collect fresh tomatoes, lettuce, and individually wrapped cheese product.

Back in the kitchen, I maneuver around Marisol and Trill, whose full-face suction indicates they're breaking up or reconciling on the rim of the scummy sink. Yusuf snores on a milk crate, a package of buns pillowing his ancient head.

I long for the sanitary gleam of Nieve's kitchen. The copper pots and silver splashbacks. My spotless knife kit and crisp chef's whites. I've tried to forget that last I saw all those things, they were spattered with blood and droplets of Snedley's curdled poivrade.

The pickup crowd swells as I put my considerable skill toward making this meal a reality, bringing each part to fruition almost simultaneously. I'm not ashamed to insist it is a virtuosic display. I pop the picked-off sesame seeds into my humming mouth. Even the 7 Up milkshake strikes me as delicious—inspiring!

By the time I'm tossing condiments into the bursting pair of brown paper bags, people impatient for simpler fare have raised a stink at the counter. Alonso bursts into the kitchen: "Are you killing the cows yourself? Let's go!"

"Call 8," I say. Alonso goes for the bags, but I step in his way. "And if you don't mind, I'd like to present them myself."

"The goddamn artist," he grieves. "I'm too mad to argue. Do it."

But Customer 8 isn't at the counter. I call the number twice, and as I begin to call it again, the other customers

"They're not here!"

"—how long it takes to cook one burger."

"This place has really had it."

"I'm 9," someone helpfully offers.

I flee to the grill, taking the unclaimed food and telling Marisol to alert me the moment anyone shows up asking for it.

Alonso in his panic has struck an accidental point: I've let arrogance in craft prevent me from serving our clientele. Protocol for a difficult order is always enlisting a fellow cook—not that Trill or Yusuf seem inclined to pick up a spatula in the plausible future—but how could I have let them butcher my symphony?

I work double-fast to clear the bottleneck. When we hit the lull an hour later, I walk to the front and take Marisol aside.

Like a kidnapper."

"Like in a movie, when the kidnapper calls There was like that."

'Man or woman?" her teachers have grown very tired of. "Was it a regular called it in? How did they sound on the phone?"

voice was like that."

Maribel seems uncomfortable with the question. "Not sure."

Grease-spotted bags in hand, I march to the parking lot. The caller perhaps had expected delay and was idling graciously in his car. I find nobody but a middle-aged brunette in a dowdy skirt, sucking on a sleek ivory vaporizer.

I can't stop myself uttering oaths.

"Have one of these," the stranger says, producing a pack of cigarettes. "I keep them for the less enlightened. What's in the bags?"

"Unclaimed order," I say, lighting up.

"Enough for a soccer team. Sure they didn't want delivery?"

"I work in a den of idiots. I'm sure of nothing."

"Let me guess. It's—" And here she recites the exact order, down to sesame seed removal, the full-size paper towels. I stare.

"Why didn't you...?"

"Oh, it's not my food. But I'm familiar with your fellow's M.O."

"Um."

"The same order was called in at thirty different burger joints today. You seem to be the only cook to rise to the challenge." Waves of jealousy and pride. I'd assumed I was special; I was special. "May I?" she asks, indicating the bags.

I hand them over, and she pokes through, nodding at the burnt few fries in their sleeves and the melting ice cream concoction.

"Jim," I say.

"Tiffany Bunce. Founder and chief reporter for *Killer Serial*. Walk with me down the pier? Not to ride the roller coaster."

I glance back at the restaurant—if you'd even call it that—and admit to myself that I can't save it. Another slow day and Alonso would have let me go. Somehow, the cheaper the cuisine, the more incompetence goes rewarded.

I follow Tiffany Bunce.

"No disrespect, why you working there?" she asks. We pass through a hall of ghoulish unwinnable carnival games. "Many layers below your scene."

"I'm on probation," I tell her. "Two years ago I chopped off the sous chef's index finger when he botched my signature sauce."

"Then maybe you two will get along."

We've run up against a snowy-haired old man in tweeds who is fishing right off the boardwalk, laughing into the salty wind with each tug of the line on his rod.

"That's actually not allowed," I tell him. "These fish are protected."

"Is that my food," he says without turning his head.

"I've got your sympathetic ear," says Tiffany, "so spill." She reveals an ancient tape recorder and readies herself with a notebook.

"Do you realize," the old man says to me, recling in an empty hook that he fingers with some pleasure,

"that Tiffany's entire readership, and therefore all her tips, come from minimum-wage convenience slaves, as they're the only species with the inclination and opportunity to page through such appalling trash?"

"Your total is \$19.80, sir."

"The Editor," he says. "I'm him."

"That's \$19.80, Mr. Editor. Plus, if you wouldn't mind, the tip."

"I can't believe it," Tiffany says. "You crazy, crazy idiot."

The old man gazes at me with watery, gray disappointment. Then he grabs the crumpled sacks and casts them into the ocean, the fishing rod right after. Sticky foam swallows my masterpiece as anger boils in my guts.

"You shouldn't have taken that mad order. Then, to go so far as to track me down..." The Editor laughs. He is laughing, I understand, at me.

I hear myself speak, barely apprehending the words. Pulled by searing, invisible wires, I advance toward him. I'm about to hurt this man, and he sees it, laughing again. I notice the flensing knife just before it slashes my palm.

"Yes, Miss Bunce," he says somewhere in my fog of pain, "I killed those authors. I left their terrible books at the scenes, much improved by my corrections, but what did it matter? All anyone wanted to talk about was the blood, the blood."

"My goddamn hand!" I yelp.

"I'm doing you a favor, young man," The Editor says. He tosses the knife to the surf as well. "I just imagined you might understand. The publishing world never will."

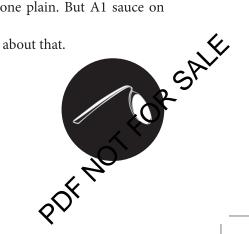
"Wow," says Tiffany, scribbling hard. "This... wow. You ready to hit the precinct, dude? That works well for a chapter break."

"Write it mostly that way," The Editor says, walking them ashore to fame. "Don't describe what I had on. Make him more effete somehow."

This sandblasted, tsunami-prone shack—I say with all the humility of a low-ranking goon in a paper hat—is the reason to visit our sun-crazed street. We're proud of our neighborhood, our fine local flavor. Anybody who strolls in, drunk, hungry, seeking shade, is entitled to anything I can provide with my limited range of ingredients. In truth, where some fry cooks might rankle at this or that special request, I find these welcome breaks in the American monotony of medium-cheeseburger-hold-the-tomato.

"Three patties," Marisol groans at me. "One cheese and onions, one mustard, one plain. But A1 sauce on everything."

"How rare," I say to her about that.

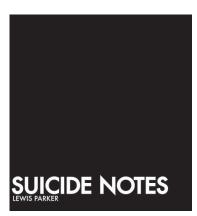


MY SPIDER IS FULL OF BATH TUBS

MORE TITLES FROM MORBID BOOKS



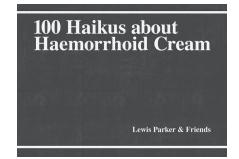
Shakespeare: Tory Scum t-shirt

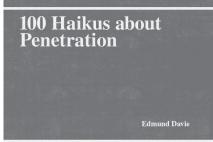


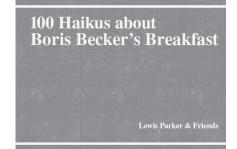
Ltd. ed. hand-typed poetry book



Offensive photocopied pamphlet

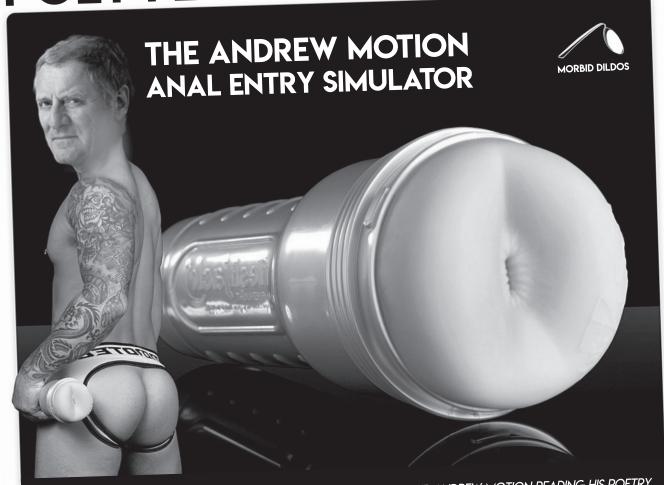






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