

CARPS IN THE MUD

By JOSH V.



How imperceptive her religion made her! The fumes of that incense obscured the human heart. Skimming the surface, she ignored the battle in the mud. After La Trobe had been excruciated by the Rector's interpretation, by the maulings and the manglings of the actors . . . "She don't want our thanks, Lucy," he said gruffly. What she wanted, like that carp (something moved in the water) was darkness in the mud... coarse words descending like maggots through the waters...

She fluttered her eye over the surface... she had a glimpse of silver—the great carp himself, who came to the surface so very seldom... "Ourselves," she murmured. And retrieving some glint of faith from the grey waters, hopefully, without much help from reason, she followed the fish; the speckled, streaked, and blotched; seeing in that vision beauty, power, and glory in ourselves... beauty which is goodness; the sea on which we float. Mostly impervious, but surely every boat sometimes leaks?

He would carry the torch of reason till it went out in the darkness of the cave. For herself, every morning, kneeling, she protected her vision. Every night she opened the window and looked at leaves against the sky. Then slept. Then the random ribbons of birds' voices woke her.²

¹ Art by Kay Ingulli

² *Between the Acts* by Virginia Woolf

So one thing led to another; and the conglomeration of things pressed you flat; held you fast, like a fish in water.³

California Static

Who are you naked
What's at the core
Locked in abasement
Under the floor
When the old feeling
Fills you up
Crushed below patterns
Is entertainment
Worth living for
Watch your arrangement
Set as it pours
One day you will wake underwater and feel
Your face streaming out to the sea
When the old feeling
Fills you up
Crushed below patterns
Are you more than habits
California static
Holding back
Who are you naked
What's at the core
What are you making
Who is it for

Tonight the moon is very bright.

I have not seen it for over thirty years, so today when I saw it I felt in unusually high spirits. I begin to realize that during the past thirty-odd years I have been in the dark; but now I must be extremely careful. Otherwise why should that dog at the Chao house have looked at me twice?

I have reason for my fear.⁴

³ *Between the Acts* by Virginia Woolf

⁴ "Diary of a Madman" by Lu Xun

Boston

I remember
Back in Boston
How the light quivered from your mouth
And you hoped
On my behalf
For something pure
Something tame
And you're dancing
As you're walking
Started talking to the homeless man
And I know
That there's something
That I can't make you understand
I can't drag you here
I wait beneath the moon
The wolves are coming soon
Let's save the afternoon
Don't follow me
To the moon
We're laughing
Distracted
I feel light when I kiss your mouth
And I float on your surface
As the sea turns black
And you look like
Someone's sister
In that wolf shirt we loved so much
And I wish that I'd never
Learned what it means to be tame

In our primes we're still ugly
Elites resigned to the suffering mass
Alone in every moment
Humanized by the offspring
You wake me up from my stress-dream of
The haunting, endless moments
Killing time on the subway
The night you said that you loved me and
The soul of every moment

There was one more circumstance tormenting me at that time: no one was like me, and I wasn't like anyone else. "I'm alone," I mused, "and they are everyone"; and I sank deep into thought.

From all this it's clear that I was still just a boy.⁵

Less

I feel so much less in the moment
Analyze the bones
A realist would curb less corrosive
Now I'm growing fault
Hunted down by the eyelid
Penetrating to vapor
With gears turning frozen in motion
Amplifying doubt
And breath blowing out of proportion
Acidic and frothed
Someday I'll see the molehill
And no longer be a mole

Silo

Building ice
Awfully quiet
Films seem nice
Studio light
You love your dog
And though you're small
You know he needs you
Wistful all
Skin too small
You love your dog
And when you're not awake
You feel alive
And though you're small
The ocean bleeds through
I kissed her
Hallelujah!
Hope for some change
As long as it will never hurt

⁵ *Notes from Underground* by Fyodor Dostoevsky

The Grecian state is the era of the bodily nature, the perfection of the senses—of the spiritual nature unfolded in strict unity with the body. In it existed those human forms which supplied the sculptor with his models of Hercules, Phoebus, and Jove; not like the forms abounding in the streets of modern cities, wherein the face is a confused blur of features, but composed of incorrupt, sharply defined, and symmetrical features, whose eye-sockets are so formed that it would be impossible for such eyes to squint, and take furtive glances on this side and on that, but they must turn the whole head. The manners of that period are plain and fierce.⁶

They dispatched me, a lonely boy, crushed by their reproaches, already introspective, taciturn, and regarding everything around him savagely. My schoolmates received me with spiteful and pitiless jibes because I wasn't like any of them. But I couldn't tolerate their jibes; I couldn't possibly get along with them as easily as they got along with each other. I hated them all at once and took refuge from everyone in fearful, wounded, and excessive pride.⁷

In addition to its original nastiness, the mouse has already managed to pile up all sorts of other nastiness around itself... some kind of stinking mess consisting of doubts, anxieties, and, finally, spittle showered upon it by the spontaneous men of action who stand by solemnly as judges and arbiters, roaring with laughter until their sides split... There, in its disgusting, stinking underground, our offended, crushed, and ridiculed mouse... will recall its insult down to the last, most shameful detail; and each time it will add more shameful details of its own, spitefully teasing and irritating itself with its own fantasy.⁸

For the shadow of faintness... had deepened now, at the back of her brain (which is the part furthest from sight) into a pool where things dwell in darkness so deep that what they are we scarcely know. She now looked down into this pool or sea in which everything is reflected—and, indeed, some say that all our most violent passions, and art and religion are the reflections which we see in the dark hollow at the back of the head when the visible world is obscured for the time.⁹

*Keep coming now
Possessed of nothing more than hell
Before I can speak
My world is wishing me asleep
Weigh me down
And when the darkness comes around
Repeating heads¹⁰*

⁶ “History” by Ralph Waldo Emerson

⁷ *Notes from Underground* by Fyodor Dostoevsky

⁸ *Notes from Underground* by Fyodor Dostoevsky

⁹ *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf

¹⁰ “Lose My Breath” by my bloody valentine

Greek

Listen

You're not like them
Their consonance drains
Hidden in the hissing
In the severance pay
You anguished shell
You're going to hell
Your candlelight is gone
Dark hollow

Listen

You're not like them
You'd never cave
Hidden in the fissures
'fore the mirror stage
You frightened mouse
You're breathing loud
The men of action howl
Dark hollow

Hello awful, you look good
When no one stops you though they could
We're hideous, we're down below
Deleted from your vapid codes
You're just on a streak
You're so complete
You're so unique
You're so you
I'm just out of time
I'll never find
Your smirking pride
You're smirking
Half of me still envies you
You're recognized
We recognize you
So have fun
You fucking tyrants

Ulrich... quietly went to sleep, with exactly the same delight in the disappearing spirals of fading consciousness that he had already experienced at the back of his mind during his defeat. When he woke up again he assured himself that his injuries were not of any significance, and went on musing over his experience...

Doubtless Ulrich had addressed himself to his companion in this lively way partly in the vain wish to make her forget the wretched situation in which she had found him.¹¹

Cologne

We sat in her car
Dark and apart
You never told me
How you felt
She answers slowly
And I don't
And then it set in
The walls closing in
There was no mystery to exploit
Just distance piercing
Through the void
Never let you mess with you
The sober truth progresses you
Well this introspection smells like cheap cologne
And that falseness is degrading to my soul
While the hospital's a stranger and I'm young
It's a tragedy to Narcissus this love
Where reflections turn investments
And the sentences obsessive
Desperate search for some transcendence
From this pensive less-than nest-building
We sat in her car
Dark and apart
You think you know me
Well I don't
The grips control me
But they won't
I'll never give in
It's about to begin
Surrender wholly
To one hope

¹¹ *The Man Without Qualities* by Robert Musil

When K. looked at the castle he sometimes thought he saw someone sitting quietly there, looking into space, not lost in thought and thus cut off from everything else, but free and at ease, as if he were alone and no one was observing him. He must notice that he himself was under observation, but that didn't disturb him in the slightest, and indeed—it was hard to tell whether this was cause or effect—the observer's eyes could find nothing to fasten on, and slipped away from the figure. This impression was reinforced today by the early coming of darkness.¹²

The cyborg is a creature in a postgender world; it has no truck with... seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity. In a sense, the cyborg has no origin story in the Western sense—a “final” irony since the cyborg is also the awful apocalyptic telos of the “West's” escalating dominations of abstract individuation, an ultimate self untied at last from all dependency, a man in space... The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence.¹³

The transformation of the commodity relation into a thing of ‘ghostly objectivity’ cannot therefore content itself with the reduction of all objects for the gratification of human needs to commodities. It stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of man; his qualities and abilities are no longer an organic part of his personality, they are things which he can ‘own’ or ‘dispose of’ like the various objects of the external world. And there is no natural form in which human relations can be cast, no way in which man can bring his physical and psychic ‘qualities’ into play without their being subjected increasingly to this reifying process.¹⁴

The force of the Adorno-Horkheimer analysis of the culture industry, however, lies in its demonstration of the unexpected and imperceptible introduction of the commodity structure into the very form and content of the work of art itself...¹⁵

The more poetically one remembers, the more easily one forgets, for to remember poetically is actually only an expression for forgetting. When I remember poetically, my experience has already undergone the change of having lost everything painful... The art of recollecting and forgetting will also prevent a person from foundering in any particular relationship in life—and assures him complete suspension.¹⁶

And a leper came to him beseeching him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him...¹⁷

¹² *The Castle* by Franz Kafka

¹³ “A Cyborg Manifesto” by Donna Haraway

¹⁴ “Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat” by Georg Lukacs

¹⁵ “Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture” by Frederic Jameson

¹⁶ *Either/Or* by Søren Kierkegaard

¹⁷ Matthew 8:2-3

Combination

Sense, fleeting
Crystallized then powdered
Fed to life screaming
Grasping outward
Best insights
Floating in the ether
Ironized neatly
Wrapped in plastic
And there's a combination only I can parse and twine
It's mine
Evil one

Saw the slanting of the castle looming over all the peasants at work
I stole away from the convention with the omnipresent God surveillance
Something awful started rising to my throat, coughing up the lifeblood
Invisibility meant everything to me, felt the sin on my skin
There's a combination only I can gloss in time
It's mine
Easy, hun
Don't look back
Just lie

Knock something loose in a vacuum
Your favorite tune degraded to used tissue
Concrete collisions warping vision till the residue becomes insulting
I gave them all I had in trust
They were nice enough to conceal disgust
Piercing right into my eyes
Phony saviors stripping clothes from lepers
Will you remember moments of me
After I censor
Every crime scene
Dead season
Birds already fleeing
No divine hours
Bells chime off-key

*When we fall
We fall, fall, fall down
Into the water
Where it's harder to see
And the weight of the water
Rushes onto the deep
And remember
That some things do sink¹⁸*

Departing

In a ghost town
I've found my calling
From the background
Pack sound
Departing
I've been meaning
To tell you that I'm lost
Like an idea corrected till it's gone
Renovations
Plate shifts
Free falling
It's difficult
To erase what you've started
Keel fetal
In the backseat departing
First the nightmare caresses then it fades
Spikes the bloodstream but never takes a shape
In a crashed car
Glass shards
Departing
Still I know
It's naive adolescence
Till I'm old
And my fears turn fluorescent
What if those animals that you hunted
Weren't soulless or boneless or bloodless
Cynical and emotionally stunted
In the cold
Every road leads to nothing

¹⁸ "When We Fall" by Grouper

In particular those who are condemned to stagnation are often pronounced happy on the pretext that happiness consists in being at rest. This notion we reject, for our perspective is that of existentialist ethics. Every subject plays his part as such specifically through exploits or projects that serve as a mode of transcendence; he achieves liberty only through a continual reaching out towards other liberties. There is no justification for present existence other than its expansion into an indefinitely open future. Every time transcendence falls back into immanence, stagnation, there is a degradation of existence into the 'en-sois' – the brutish life of subjection to given conditions – and of liberty into constraint and contingency.¹⁹

*I already died
I'm singing from the other side
Underneath love²⁰*

*But I don't wish that I was dead
A very old friend of mine once said
That either way you look at it you have your fits
I have my fits but feeling is good²¹*

Glow

Raison d'être
My new horizons wavered
I don't want to bleed American detachment
I don't want to be the voiceless dreaming
Pressure diamonds
Flares in the night
Make me nervous
Press through the wall
Feelings from old sins, lives ago
Healing sun, old friend
Glow
As the fashion grows and accelerates
Pulse for another name
Pulse from another vein
Who's convincing who?
If I'm gonna be around then I gotta grow
Up from the center sphere
Up through the mesosphere
To the open blue

¹⁹ *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir

²⁰ "Love Love Love" by Big Thief

²¹ "Banshee Beat" by Animal Collective

Is it worth it
Highs building lows
When the perfect milestone erodes
Blessings from
Cold lips
Eyes closed
Messy love
Frozen hope
You've done nothing wrong
Go to sleep
Some relief will come tomorrow
Those malicious visions
Will ring hollow
Don't go underground
I promise
You'll never drown

Float²²

Brace

Through the mirror I can hear you running at your own pace
Never thought to bring a living thing right out of its case
And now I'm in the mud
With orange and cold air
Don't let me go there
You've seen me lost underground
So if I want to be alone don't let me go there
After watering the weeds I want to flood out near you
And I know wind controls me but I like it when I float for miles away towards
Nothing real or sharp
When did my mind replace my heart?
I want to float
I wake in the morning with the window blowing cold air on its own
I want to cry when I'm home and the AC is on
I want to be alone
But you won't let me go there
I want to float with you
We might make it
We might be the ones who make it
Out

²² Lyrics co-written by Kay Ingulli, song by Emma Anisman

Authentic cultural creation is dependent for its existence on authentic collective life, on the vitality of the “organic” social group in whatever form... Capitalism systematically dissolves the fabric of all cohesive social groups without exception... and thereby problematizes aesthetic production and linguistic invention which have their source in group life.²³

*Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.²⁴*

*Ahh, good country
Seeds above us
Kiss this child and he'll surely wake up
I don't care if I don't wake up
You'll kiss me and I'll surely wake up²⁵*

*But her eyes in their caves of bone were still lambent. He saw her eyes only...
...Consider the gun slayers, bomb droppers here or there. They do openly what we do slyly... A
tyrant, remember, is half a slave...there's the amiable condescension of the lady of the manor—the
upper class manner...O we're all the same...Look at ourselves, ladies and gentlemen!... All the
same here I change (by way of the rhyme mark ye) to a loftier strain—there's something to be
said: for our kindness to the cat...There is such a thing—you can't deny it. What? You can't descry
it? All you can see of yourselves is scraps, orts and fragments? Well then listen to the
gramophone affirming...²⁶*

²³ “Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture” by Frederic Jameson

²⁴ Matthew 5:3-12

²⁵ “Ahh Good Country” by Animal Collective

²⁶ *Between the Acts* by Virginia Woolf

Carps in the Mud

Ambiance of smoldering fire
Blistering whole shattered
Infinite controlled inside
Stilted house capsized
There's no above
We've been orphaned here
Left to survive in an open field
We're making this up
Oblivious, immersed in pride
Scripting bad actors
Innocent or undefined
The wretched thought latter
And we know there's love
But we're afraid of them
We've seen enough, we're not interested
Hearts beatin' up
Carps in the mud
We find we're closer
You smile
Explosions
Always intersubjective
There's no ego protection
And when the sun sets
Heaven seems like you
Emptiness an attitude
Watching the sparks climb
Faces glow unveiled
Countenance kindred, scared
And when the smoke lifts
Language melts mid-air
Real wolves surround the camp
Both passions are blinding
Dark hollow eclipse
Invented innocence
And the river overflows
It's been so long
Please wake up
I miss your smile
We've been up since half past 5

After all, each thing exists only by virtue of its limitations, in other words, by virtue of a more or less hostile act against its environment.²⁷

Class struggle, and the slow and intermittent development of genuine class consciousness, are themselves the process whereby a new and organic group constitutes itself, whereby the collective breaks through the reified atomization... of capitalist social life. At this point, to say that the group exists and that it generates its own specific cultural life and expression, are one and the same.²⁸

...both Nietzsche and queer theory understand morality to be an oppressive, punitive, and normalizing force in social life. The difference between them is that queer theory advances this view from the perspective of queers—that is, from the perspective of the oppressed—rather than from the perspective of the “masters,” the noble, the great, or the (ostensibly) superior few. It is this loyalty to and solidarity with those “below” that renders queer theory’s anti-morality an emancipatory commitment rather than, like Nietzsche’s, a reactionary one...

...this queer/left politics is anything but familiar to critical social theory. Not only does it prioritize sexuality as a site and locus of both oppression and liberatory praxis, but it also does not fix that sexuality, refusing to disaggregate it into discrete categories, identities, or “orientations.” It cites no stable class system as the domination to be opposed and identifies no clearly formed revolutionary constituency that might overthrow it, focusing instead on the multiple apparatuses and institutions of power that produce coherence, intelligibility, order, and meaning through the subjectifying institutional tools of discipline, normalization, and punishment. In other words, shifting apparatuses of power produce their abjected constituencies through their own operations, which work to subjectify simultaneously as they subject. What matters is not one’s location in a class structure, then, but rather one’s relationship to hegemonic formations of subjective propriety and coherence, and it is this abjection that precisely “queers” one and produces one as queer.²⁹

²⁷ *The Man Without Qualities* by Robert Musil

²⁸ “Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture” by Frederic Jameson

²⁹ “Nietzsche and Emancipatory Politics: Queer Theory as Anti-Morality” by C. Heike Schotten

Bonfire
Go on believing that
You deserve better
But if you don't become a life form
You die
Every dissident
Sexualizing hurt
If we don't create a life form
We die
Stake the vampires
Love's not predatory
Don't eclipse the light you saw
Build the bonfire
Burn the sanctuary
This is a spiritual call to arms
Fuck you idiots
Ruling hateful cells
I've internalized your credo
And it's wrong
Every Olympian who ever side-eyed Dad
He loves like Christ's kid brother
Could you
Stake the vampires
Love's not predatory
Don't eclipse the light you saw
Build the bonfire
Burn the sanctuary
This is a spiritual call to arms

Originally, renunciation of instinct was the result of fear of an external authority: one renounced one's satisfactions in order not to lose its love. If one has carried out this renunciation, one is, as it were, quits with the authority and no sense of guilt should remain. But with fear of the super-ego the case is different. Here, instinctual renunciation is not enough, for the wish persists and cannot be concealed from the super-ego. Thus, in spite of the renunciation that has been made, a sense of guilt comes about... Instinctual renunciation now no longer has a completely liberating effect; virtuous continence is no longer rewarded with the assurance of love. A threatened external unhappiness — loss of love and punishment on the part of the external authority — has been exchanged for a permanent internal unhappiness, for the tension of the sense of guilt.³⁰

³⁰ "Civilization and its Discontents" by Sigmund Freud

*Do you realize that you have the most beautiful face?
Do you realize we're floating in space?
Do you realize that happiness makes you cry?
Do you realize that everyone you know someday will die?
And instead of saying all of your goodbyes
Let them know you realize that life goes fast
It's hard to make the good things last
You realize the sun doesn't go down
It's just an illusion caused by the world spinning round³¹*

*When I wake up I am smiling
Now I will not change my mind
I will remember the trouble in my brother's eye³²*

Outside

Outside

Hear the insects breeding
Gas spheres ignite
Past an endless ceiling
What's the pull when you're post-everything?
Earthling wounded
The sun emerged from a fog
No more pollution
Your voice is soothing
Alive and lucid
Your fiery movements
Shared illusions
The soil loosens
The sky illumines
The quiet mood-shifts
Worthless ruminations
You must have been God
Wildfire
Hellfire
Feel my insides wringing
I walked outside
Past the dead end feeling
What's the pull when you're post-everything?

³¹ "Do You Realize??" by The Flaming Lips

³² "Southern Sky" by Alex G

*Missions are stupid, Tereza. I have no mission. No one has. And it's a terrific relief to realize you're free, free of all missions.*³³

*Which will you go for
Which will you love
Which will you choose from
From the stars above
Which will you answer
Which will you call
Which will you take for
For your one and all
... Which do you dance for
Which makes you shine
Which will you choose now
If you won't choose mine
Which will you hope for
Which can it be³⁴*

*Peace was the third emotion. Love. Hate. Peace. Three emotions made the ply of human life.*³⁵

Which One
Hansel invited me
Cool as a winter breeze
As I forget my scene
And overcome my dreams
Which one
I'm in your hands
Which one
I'll understand
In time
Circling out
Phantom inside of me
Author of all I mean
Which one
I'll understand
Which one
I'm in your hands

³³ *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* by Milan Kundera

³⁴ "Which Will" by Nick Drake

³⁵ *Between the Acts* by Virginia Woolf