



156



new contrast

SOUTH AFRICAN LITERARY JOURNAL ▲ VOLUME 39 NUMBER 4 ▲ SUMMER 2011

THE COLLECTED SERIES

COLLECTED SERIES NO. 2

Short, Sharp & Snappy 1

southern African plays for high schools

COMPILED BY ROBIN MALAN
AND COLLEEN MOROUKIAN

COLLECTED SERIES NO. 1

S.A. Gay Plays 1

The Artscape Dublin Festival Plays

COMPILED BY ROBIN MALAN

COLLECTED SERIES NO. 3

Short, Sharp & Snappy 2

southern African plays for high schools

COMPILED BY ROBIN MALAN
AND COLLEEN MOROUKIAN

COLLECTED SERIES NO. 5

S.A. Gay Plays 2

an anthology of plays 1994–2010

COMPILED BY ROBIN MALAN

COLLECTED SERIES NO. 4

The Magnet Theatre 'Migration' Plays

COMPILED BY
JENNIE REZNEK
FRANCES MAREK, FANISWA YISA
AND MARK FLEISHMAN

TO ORDER:

email info.junkets@iafrica.com

or call 076 169 2789

Junkets^{*}
Junkets Publisher

Tel 021 448 7186 | Fax 086 647 5447 | Cell 076 169 2789 | email info.junkets@iafrica.com
<http://junketspublisher.blogspot.com> | <http://playscriptseries.blogspot.com>

*By permission of the British Library (Ashley 4869 f.2)

156

new contrast

South African Literary Journal

Volume 39, No 4, Summer 2011



Published in association with the
Centre for Creative Writing, UCT

Edited by HA Hodge

Literary Patrons

André Brink, JM Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, Geoffrey Haresnape, Dan Jacobson

Directors

Michael Cope, Michael King, Paul Mills

New Contrast is published by the South African Literary Journal Limited,
a non-profit company limited by guarantee.

New Contrast, PO Box 44844, Claremont, 7735, Cape Town, South Africa

<http://www.newcontrast.net/>

E-mail Editor: ed@newcontrast.net

Business manager: Sonja Wilker business@newcontrast.net

ISSN-8: 1017-5415

ISSN-13: 977-1017-54100-8

Original cover artwork by *croc-e-moses*; design by Sonja Wilker

DTP by User Friendly

Printed and bound by Mega Digital

Publication date December 2011

SUBSCRIPTION DETAILS 2012 AND COMPLIMENTARY COPIES

Contributors receive a complimentary e-book copy, as a token of appreciation.

- Local subscriptions are R350 p.a.
- Subscribers from SADC countries are charged R475 p.a.
- Other international subscriptions are R600 p.a.
- Electronic subscriptions are R100 p.a. worldwide.
- Current prices are shown on the website – www.newcontrast.net

Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the South African Literary Journal (address above). Electronic transfers to Standard Bank, Adderley Street,

Branch code: 02-00-09 • Account name: South African Literary Journal Ltd

Account type: Current account • Account number: 070508666

Credit card facilities are available on-line.

Notes

the old monk reads the sage
on the architecture of faith
the unsupported dome
gives him perspectives
of the infinite
and solutions
to differential equations

Sep 26, 11

I had the great good fortune to attend the Second Teheran Congress of Iranian and International Poets in Teheran and Shiraz during October. How travel to an old country changes time. It's not only walking around Persepolis with ghosts of Greeks. Nor the sweet tea offered by the shopkeeper, and taken after the purchase while we sit blinking in the sun near the baths and the mosque. Nor the simple good manners of people. It's not just the pace: it is a timelessness unconcerned by schedules – a place more suited to the poet? At the tombs of Hafez and Saadi in Shiraz, brushed by the scent of roses and the laughter of children, I stood with the Persians listening to them read from the masters, as they have these last 800 years.

This is the last issue of the year. We are back on schedule. In it, we bring you the imagination and art of 22 contributors, local and international; some familiar, others new to us. We have the usual healthy crop of poems and short stories. I hope you will find something of interest to your taste.

I wish you well this coming year.

Hugh

Contents

Doug Downie	Art	7
	One Dog Barking	7
	The Bad Hosts	9
Barbara Adair	Desperation	10
	A Bed in a Room with a View	12
Brett Beiles	Alms and the Man	20
	Nails in the Coffin	20
	The 10 Commandments 2011	21
Michael Rolfe	On the requisite skill-set for being a tri-lingual Jewish stand-up comedian in Cape Town during the tourist season	23
	Stalking the Muse	25
Damian Garside	The Nature of the Argument	26
Gail Dendy	Mirror Image	28
	The Flood	29
	The Guided Tour of the Afterlife	31
Lara Kirsten	uit die resonante holtes	34
	klank-koors	36
Robert Edward Bolton	Pantheon	37
Oliver Price	Hermit	39
Lucretia Pretorius	Magic	39
Ruben Mowszowski	Report from Hotel Infinity	41
	The Immortal Baby	49
Rachel Paton	A Descriptive Analysis of Two White Chameleons	54
Kerry Hammerton	Rhondda Valley	55
	We have led ourselves	56
	Daddy's Girl	57
Tom Byrne	[untitled]	58
Tendai Mwanaka	In This Sea	59
Aisling Heath	Last Skin	59
	Jelly	60
Seven Redform	Seized	61

new contrast

Marí Peté	Scribed	62
Julia Kramer	Cassia	63
	Death of a Dikkop	63
	Nightjar	64
Eleni Philippou	Of You	64
	April 1994	74
Patricia Schonstein Pinnock	Madonna of Child Soldiers	75
	Matabele lament to the Virgin Mary	76
Johan Geldenhuys	The Soon Return – Part 7	77
Contributors		87

Doug Downie

Art

One must believe that there are modes of expression
that pull back the curtains
that cover the core of life.

One Dog Barking

It was a wild night in the old settler town that sat in a bowl on a hilltop, tipped on the edge of the future. There was singing and screaming and dogs barking and the howls of people whose gender or race or age could not be discerned. The arrogant accelerations of excessively loud engines ripped asphalt off the streets and the pop of what might have been guns punctured the night.

It was a routine night for me.

All day long some guy down at the petrol station had been singing, in a guttural and broken voice a song of only his imagination, while random hooters popped the air. He had stopped for a few hours and then begun again. Such endurance amazed me.

By the time midnight came close there were voices everywhere. They could have been coming from the trees on Hill St. or the belfry up at St. George's, or a gathering on Raglan Rd., or an event at Rhodes, or just any group of Saturday night people who were both near and far.

People were partying in their way, as I was in mine.

I sat there and I thought: 'I will die, and no one will know my story.'

And then I thought: 'Life's like that.'

Friday had been an interesting day.

It all started when I woke up and realized I'd forgotten to pull up the little green latch on the alarm clock. So I was late in getting going. I don't have to punch a time clock, but it doesn't look good.

Of course, that's part of the problem. The Episcopalian adherence to early to rise, early to bed, ran like a gash through the gut of the life I sought after. It was the dominant paradigm, and it was pathetic, but I confess I had it far better than in all those years of frozen dawns and bare fingers on fire, scraping ice from a broken windshield.

Within minutes people started to draggle in to see me, as if they'd been hovering in the corridor waiting for my arrival. On any given day I could go for hours without a soul recognizing my existence, but sudden bursts of supplicants penetrated the brief period between lock click and log on.

I didn't begrudge any of them for those moments, for it was my job, and unlike the other side of my life this one was a social life. It allowed the other side of my life, and I was grateful for that.

The stream carried students, staff, salespeople, colleagues, maintenance workers, and various more or less lost souls, some of them plain flotsam and some of them sparks, brilliance in the making. I felt lucky to be in their presence.

None of them knew where I had come from, or where I was going.

It was a day much like any other day. I had my day routine and my night routine. It was too damn bad one had to sleep somewhere in between.

Not that I don't waste time. I succumb to the enticements of the internet as much as any of my compatriots – for example. The intellectual life is fettered by trying to frame it in filigrees of mahogany or oak.

So when Jimbo came in, shuffling around a bit, shy as a duiker caught in the lights, I was taken a bit by surprise.

'I just wanted to thank you for all you've done for us this year. It was a good year. I got a lot out of it.'

'I'm glad to hear it Jimbo. All I really wanted to do was to help you guys out a bit.'

He thanked me again, and bowed backwards through the door as if he was a wraith.

I looked out the window at the plane tree that stood out there and which had marked the seasons for me, now in full greenery, with a weaver pulling at a recalcitrant bit of phloem or xylem. Clouds were rolling in and I saw a bolt of lightning split the darkness above the township. I knew the temperature was dropping like a stone into a bottomless well, the typical late afternoon loss of summer or spring that happened in this place.

And then the building shook; the walls and floors seemed to ripple, and the ripple rolled up my jeans, ran across my thighs, grabbed my gut, slid up my sides and pulled my ears, and finally skitched my scalp. What would make a building rumble so?

I sat dazed for less than a minute ... they were having training manoeuvres up at the Army base. It was not common, and it had never made the house of science shake before.

The reality of my leaving gripped me – a warm glove or a cold vise, I wasn't sure.

By two o'clock in the morning, the aural environment had become softer, and silence was no longer a foreign thing. It was lovely to hear very little at all, and it was so rare a thing that I simply sat and listened, and then listened some more, for quite some time.

Finally there was only the sound of one dog barking.

The night was not hopeless.

The Bad Hosts

The bad hosts don't seem to realize that they are not so special.
 Someone new comes into their midst and they sniff around
 like dogs
 and wonder when they will be approached for entry into the club –
 when will the applicant bow before them in order to be allowed to sit
 amongst them?

They've created a myth for themselves, and they've come to believe it.

There are piles of bad hosts situated across a myriad of loci,
 like turds fallen onto a broken sidewalk that stretches from horizon to
 horizon

all believing the myth they've created for themselves.

Funny people, those ones.

Barbara Adair

Desperation

Harsh brilliant light in Khorixas gives birth to dust in sunbeams at the BP diesel pump.

Tropicana Bar in Khorixas gives birth to mercenaries and evil African and prostitutes and guerrillas.

Gravel roads in Khorixas gives birth to

a white pick up truck swerves from side to side at 120 kms per hour
two pieces of wood in the form of a cross on the side of the road shed
tears

a dead flower nods its head

The Supreme Commander of the protection force in German South West Africa; 1904 – Lothar von Trotha: *I believe that the nation as such should be annihilated, or, if this is not possible by tactical measures, have to be expelled from the country... This will be possible if the water-holes from Grootfontein to Gobabis are occupied ...*

THE SEA OF CARE WILL SURGE IN VAIN UPON A CARELESS SHORE

The constant movement of our troops will enable us to find the small groups who have moved backwards and destroy them gradually.

Shark Island: it would not be kind to compare this island to a concentration camp; it is a tourist attraction: death has a number, death is recorded, death is calculated.

1908 - 80% - dead.

Treaty: *My intimate knowledge of many central African tribes (Bantu and others) has everywhere convinced me of the necessity that the Negro does not respect treaties but only brute force.*

Dead, brute force, dead women, dead men, brute force, dead, brute
force, dead men, dead force, brute men, force, dead women, dead
force, brute

And the **black-faced impala** (*aepyceros melampus peters*) is a subspecies of the common impala (*Aeapyceros melampus*).

Shoulder height – 91 cm Mass – 45–55 kg Gestation – 180 – 210 days

These antelopes are not difficult to tell it apart. The **black faced impala** has **black** facial markings. The black faced impala has come close to extinction. Between 1968 and 1971 **ONLY** 310 **black faced impala** were recorded.

every bit of this land is sacred africa is the only continent that I can love without me africa is doomed forty years have passed since I, my friend hermann and the dog otto sought the shelter of the desert in order to escape the madness of the second world war our bare feet traced two parallel paths in the red sand

Hello! What time is it? summer time, 12h00 in Khorixas, 12h00 in London, 12h00 in Berlin: winter time 11h00 in Khorixas, 13h00 in London, 13h00 in Berlin. But always at the same time on the same day two plum coloured starlings, one male and one female, sit on an evergreen shrub, dense clumps of green decussate leaves, pink berries rich in mustard oil, the female is hidden by contorted branches, yellow eyes, the fruit of the tree is Biblical, prickly, accusatory, exterminating.

The cliché is a sacred form of language because it is developed by a community not by an individual.

THE CRUELITIES OF THE GREAT WAR WERE BROUGHT BY THE RADIO INTO OUR DESERT EVENINGS, *our thoughts and talks were much occupied with the riddles of the evolution of life and of man, his astonishing cultures,* HIS FATEFUL FAILINGS; THE PRIMITIVE TRAITS OF HUMAN NATURE. So even after half a lifetime, the scenes of our desert existence are sharply etched into my memory, and every visit to the Namib feels like a return home..... the red dunes to the south of the **Kuiseb** canyon.

..... nothing is more wicked than men who raise hymns of praise

to heaven for those who have injured the human race: Leonardo da Vinci in 1498.

A Bed in a Room with a View

objects are words, words have a use, a value, an occupation, people give them a use, a value or an occupation, words contain, objects control, can you think of anything that is nothing at all, the expression of a hand, a lingering finger, an eye lash, nothing, the **double** bed is in the centre of the room, or, to a certain extent it is, it is more or less, in the centre of the room, it is pushed against a wall, the centre of a wall, if you take a tape measure and measure from the one end of the wall to the other, which ever end it is that you choose to measure from, you will find that the **double** bed is not exactly centred, there will be a few centimetres that are different on either side, but if you stand back and look at it, it is perfectly centred, the eye is never as accurate as a tape measure, stand back, look at it, the **double** bed is perfectly centred as you want it to be perfectly centred and so it is perfectly centred, the wall is *red, an off red*, slightly orange, *a little bit fiery, not blood red, just red*, the red wall reaches up to a ceiling, the ceiling is white, if you lie on the bed on your back and watch the white ceiling for a long time, almost mesmerised by a colour that is devoid of colour, there is no colour, white is colourless, it has no name, no label, you will notice that in the corners of the room, where the white ceiling and the red wall, or sometimes another white wall, overlap, there are cobwebs, *silver silk strings*, do spiders make silk webs or is it silkworms that do this, silk, an oriental, erotic fabric, a magical miracle that emerges from a worm, a slippery, squeezable colourless white worm, hold a piece of silk against your inner thigh, the skin that covers your instep, caress your toes, feel the glistening embrace, the *silver silk strings* that the spider spins are silky, maybe these strings are not silk, but they are slender and soft, evil, the strings of *silk* stretch from the ceiling, the no colour ceiling, nothing, it shelters you from the rain and the sun, to a *red* or white wall, a wall that holds the room in place, holds the ceiling above you, as you lie on the double bed, where the ceiling and the *red* wall overlap the *silver silk* strings are more

obvious as they make contact with another colour, **bloody red, an arterial seam**, listen carefully, hear a heart beat, a suicide, a murder, as there is a contrast between the colour of the silver *silk* and a colour that is something, **red**. but even where the wall is white, if you look carefully, the ghost of a *silver* thread is evident, sometimes, but not always, a spider, a **chocolate flavoured flat spider** the size of a 50 cent coin crouches in the shimmer, it waits for an insect to come its way, if you are lucky and lie on the bed for long enough, something does come its way, a small fly, a mosquito will fly into the silky spider's home and is caught in the *silk*, small flying insects are unable to discern that the *silver silk* is there, they are unable to tell the difference in colour, colour blind, they have no word for colour, so that where the *silk* is set against the nothingness of white they find it difficult, if not impossible, to know that the *silver silky rope* is there, are they aware that this defect is dangerous, they cannot know as they cannot speak, handicapped, crippled, the noose of the gallows widens, it is easier if the **spider's** *silver home* is set against the red wall as here the blood **darkness**, heart shaped blood, and the powerful lightness of *silver* is more noticeable, if you lie on the bed for a long time, for the eternity of a thin forever insect life, some or other small fly will flutter into the *silk*, then it is eaten for breakfast or supper or lunch, the **flavoured spider** does not know time, it does not know that there are words for the meals that take place at different times of the day, meals divide a day

neatly, the **flat spider**, this, **O**, is its size, watches the struggle for a short while, then in a **chocolate syrupy** passage the **spider** moves, the struggle lessens, silk poisons, paralyses, it's tiring to keep struggling, to fight mortality, and the insect is eaten, nutritious, vitamins and protein, the flat **chocolate spider** makes a hole somewhere in the body of the small fly and sucks out its **visCera**, the arachnid is fat, corpulent, it is satisfied, it can live longer, spider, there were six letters and now there are 8, there are four walls in the room, four walls make up a conventional room, some rooms have more than four walls, a pentagonal room will have f[555]ive walls, a hexagonal room will have si[666]x walls, what has ei[888]ght walls, in most cases a conventional room will have four walls, count the rooms that you know that do not have four walls, are there any, this room has four walls, two of which **are red, an orange sunny red, fire flames** burn, the other two walls are

white, not a bright white, but an off white; the colour of an egg shell white, a creamy white, cream is wholesome, healthy, the white of the colour that is written on a tin of paint, slightly tinted, a thought, cultivation, walls should not be painted a bright white, they are painted something off this white, a rainbow, for if they are painted bright white then the glossy sun will make the walls too intense, too vivid, a blinding void, lost, the bed is a double bed, what the salesmen in the retail shops call a double bed, it is big enough to contain two people, but not so big that two people can sleep without touching each other's bodies, without feeling honey silky skin, bees sting, a double bed, so the salesmen in the retail shops say, is most often bought by people who do not have money to buy a bigger bed, a queen size bed or a king size bed, but those that are not salesmen in retail shops will say that smaller beds are not bought as two people want to sleep far away from each other, they do not want to touch in the night, they do not want to feel the sweat and toil of another as they feel it on themselves, they do not want this memory, it contains, limits their limitations, the vanished fatal memory, this bed is a double bed, perhaps it was bought for none of the above reasons, perhaps it was bought as it fits perfectly in the centre of the room, or more or less the centre of the room, the double bed is pushed against the centre of a wall, the red wall, *the just red wall*, and the eye cannot discern that it is not quite at the centre of the wall, the eye will see what it wants to see, a photograph, and it sees that the double bed is centred, the double bed has no head board, it has bed clothes on it, sheets and a duvet and two pillows, the bed coverings are white, not the white of the walls, beige egg shell creamy white, but a pure white, an authentic white, a worthy white, a white that has no colour, a no remembrance white, you fear a memory, recall a dream, the double bed cover is so bright white, so authentic white, that it is dazzling, it blinds the sleeper, the two pillows are often placed at an angle, not quite straight across the top of the double bed, balanced in a jaunty fashion, they have just been thrown there, casually, just thrown there as if it does not matter where they are placed as long as they are there, useful, and yet the authentic white pillows are always at the same angle, everyday, a specific look, an off balanced look, a gay abandoned look, it is easy to throw a pillow onto a bed, the double bed is always made up, except for a brief period in the morning when someone, 1 person, that sleeps in the double bed, despite the fact

that it is bed that can accommodate two people, wakes up and climbs out of it, then the white coverings are crumpled and dishevelled, but this is only for a short period, then the **doub1e** bed is arranged again, the **doub1e** bed covering, the duvet, the sheets and the pillows, are pulled up, made up, neat, unnatural, a covering, the one who sleeps in the **doub1e** bed, alone, cannot feel another in the night as there is no other, it is a **doub1e** bed but it can manage 1 person just as easily as it can manage 2, sometimes, on an occasion, the **doub1e** bed is shared with another other, now 1 person can feel the other, the person, touch the other, the last heart beat of time, it is a **doub1e** bed after all, not a queen size bed or a king size bed, as a **doub1e** bed fits against the centre of the wall, not a measured centre, but an unhurried, leisurely centre, the eye is not deliberate, it is not precise, it is only calculating, then the coverings are left crumpled for a longer period, the **doub1e** bed, it is a place of fun, parody, it is not only slept in, it is rumpled and creased and wet, not guarded, controlled, on the left hand side of the **doub1e** bed is another red wall, *you can call it red, almost red, just red*, but both red walls do not touch each other, they are cut off from each other by a doorway that leads into a passage, torn into two, divided by an enclave, a space, an empty space that is there to fill, clothing can be packed on shelves and hung on coat hangers, there are always clothes, four or five pairs of trousers and possible six shirts, hanging in this space, it is never empty as empty is not full, full is valuable, worthy, it is not blank, a vacant lot, the word martyr does not fit into this sentence, this space, there is a thick warm woollen jacket, short sleeve shirts are in one pile, long sleeve shirts in another, an assortment of *pink* and black and *red* and *green* and *orange* and *mauve* and *blue* and vermilion underwear, the wall on the left hand side, the *off red wall*, is shorter than the wall against which the **doub1e** bed lies, this is because the intervening doorway and dressing space condense it, narrow it down, across the way from the **doub1e** bed, in front of it, and to the right hand side is glass, on the right is a long window, and in the front a long window and two doors, the windows and the doors in front of the **doub1e** bed open out on to several trees, there may be three of them, **blouhaak** acacia trees and river sand, the glass of the windows and the doors are clear, you can see what is inside the room if you are outside of it, and you can see outside the room if you are inside it, if you stand at the front of the **doub1e** bed, or if you lie down on it and prop yourself up on an

elbow, it is easy to see what is outside the room, the **blouhaak** acacia trees are most often green, they are not dried out, useless, worthless, they have brown slender branches, almost spindly, and the leaves are tiny, they cluster around each other in green feathery whorls, the thorns on the tree are not blue, despite the name of the tree being the **blouhaak**, **these not blue thorns**, they are not easily discernible if you are lying down on the bed propped up on an elbow, as you are too far away from them to make them out precisely, but if you go slightly closer then you can see them, fish hooks, penetrating, cut open skin and make it bleed, hooks that are difficult to remove, death hooks, but you are inside the room looking out at the **thorns** on the tree so they pose no problem, they are just there, there to be used for whatever it is that thorns on thorn trees are used for, a washing line, a machine gun, clean, competent, looking out from the room, whether you are standing up or lying on the **double** bed propped up on an elbow, the outside appears to be sliced into pieces of a horizontal puzzle, a picture in a frame cut into a puzzle, for the windows and the doors are bisected with metal, a **grey blue metal**, the **grey blue metal** bars are not bars, they can not keep the bad-mannered, offensive, disrespectful out, rather they are bars that are there to keep the glass of the window in, they are **horizontal**, depending upon which angle you are looking from, whether this is from the outside or from the inside, so the **grey blue metal** bars divides the picture of the trees outside into two, into three, into 4 and into 5, a misshapen picture, perplexing, a mystery, and so at all times you lie still, in one position, careful, if you lie on the **double** bed, the bright pure white of authenticity, there are pictures of slim brown trees tiny green feathery leaves, divided, cubed trees, a cubist painting in a picture frame of **blue and gray**, two dimensions, the same object, two objects, 3 and four, or 1 object, that just looks as if it is two or 3 or 4, if you lie on the **double** bed with white coverings, pure white, authentic white, not off white or a nutritious creamy white, you may become confused as you are unable to decide which is what or what is which, but soon this twisted view becomes the real view, the normal view, and then if you move your head slightly, just ever so slightly, the view becomes different, the distortion changes, normal, the slender brown branches, almost spindly, with tiny green leaves that are clustered around each other in green feathery whorls take on a different look, a new look, a new two dimensional look, you can lie like this for hours and as you

move your head ever so slightly so that the trees are constantly moving, changing, they move nowhere, you move nowhere, somewhere, the trees with tiny green feathery whorls are not planted in a linear fashion, they are not planted like you would plant a plantation of citrus trees, but are just there, maybe the seeds blew in from somewhere and embedded themselves in the ground and the trees grew, jaunty, you cannot know, there is a pattern, a self confident, secure pattern, a blue print, a model to be copied, the pattern that you want to portray, to design and plan, creatively, as you lie down the pattern that you create depends upon the angle of your head or the time of the day, in the early morning the shadows stretch westward, the **SUN** rises in the east so it casts its rays over the trees from the east, the shadows lie forward to the west, the grey **blue** metal that crosses the glass, splits the shadows, shadows have a life, a cut up life, a bathetic touching personal life, this also depends upon the wind, if the wind is blowing the slender brown branches and tiny green leaves move in the direction of the wind, burrowing out, flat against the wind, they dance, black against brown, they crawl across the river sand, at midday when the sun is high in the sky there are few shadows, the green leaves, the green feathery leaves have to make their own lives, so they reach upwards in an attempt to find a shadow, and they never can, they never will, until the evening finds them, when the **SUN** sets in the west, the shadows move east, a ballet dancer is made, then a hot air balloon, then an aeroplane that flies to extraordinary heights, sometimes, but not often, a beautiful lizard, a more than a man lizard, walks onto the glass, if you lie very still on the **double** bed with white coverings you can watch the lizard that is worth looking at, four legs move on the grey **blue metal**, on its legs are suckers which allows the beautiful lizard, the more than a man lizard that holds its head high up to the **ball of fire in the sky**, to walk on glass, to listen to the sounding of the spheres, upside down, horizontal, vertical, in a straight or crooked line, the long tailed lizard, who is much more than a man, more than even a poet, walks across the glass, it seems to walk gently, you can never know if these suckers suck softly or they suck as a leech sucks, is the glass beneficial like blood is healthy, is glass healing like bleeding is curative, for you are not glass, you are lying inside the glass just looking at, feeling these suckling feet, the picture that you have is different to the picture that the delicate more than man like lizard has, he is cut in two, sometimes there are 2 or 3 or four dandy charming lizards, more pleasing

than men, so even though there is only one lizard, it has two front legs and a face, or a head, that is pointed forward, another has two back legs and a tail that is also pointed forward, the 3rd has no tail just a face and the fourth has nothing at all, it is not there, and you wonder where the lizard is going to, if anywhere at all, it swirls its tail, if you lie on the **double** bed with authentic, pure, bright white covers facing upwards, looking upwards, there is a fan, it is a **silver** fan made from steel, there are three long extended pieces of metal that make up the fan, they are flat, but the flat side is not facing you as you lie on your back on the **double** bed, the **silver metal** is at right angles to you, if the fan is turned on at the switch by the bedroom door it turns around, sometimes slowly or other times fast, the speed of the fan depends upon whether it has been turned up to its highest speed or whether it is at the lowest speed, the dial reads 1, 2 or 3, you can see your reflection in the fan, but the reflection is distorted, not misshapen as is the picture in its frame outside the window, but distorted as if you are in a amusement arcade, the house of mirrors, a house of mirth, laugh from one mirror to the next, depending upon the way the mirror is configured so your reflection changes, in one you may have a very large mouth and a small body, so large is your mouth in your face that as you watch yourself your face your head grows heavy on your shoulders, you swallow, in another your whole body appears to be extremely wide, in another you are frankenstein's monster, a test tube baby, and in another your head is so elongated that as you watch yourself you feel your brain stretch as if it has been placed on a rack, tortured, and you laugh again as there is nothing left for you to do, if you lie on the **double** bed so you see similar distorted images, if you incline your head one way your body appears like a ghosts face, it is pale and incandescent, if you incline your head another way your face takes up the whole space that was your body, now you are only a face, sometimes if you turn the fan on, your body becomes your face and your face becomes your body and your body becomes your face and your face becomes your body until you turn the fan off, then you only have the ghost body, the pale and iridescent body or you have a face instead of a body, sometimes if the **sun light** is bright, you can notice the **feathery whorls of green leaves** on the outside tree, reflect in the fan, but this is only if you sit at an angle and are not lying down facing upwards, on the floor next to the **double** bed with coverings that are not the colour of an egg shell but are pure and bright, is a book, it is facing

upwards so the title and the name of the author on the cover is clearly visible, it is a white cover with the words printed on it in black and blue ink, the title of the book is written in capital letters, one word is black and one word is blue, INVISIBLE CITIES, underneath this is the name of the author, italo calvino, his name is written in black letters and yet the print is much larger than that of the title of the book, INVISIBLE CITIES, it is almost three times the size of the title of the book, that is not exactly correct, the first name of the author, italo, is written in the same size print as the title of the book, although it is in small not capital letters, and the last name of the author, calvino, is written in black letters that are three times the size of the title of the book and the first name of the author, in the middle of the cover, between the title of the book and the name of the author of the book are tiny blue words, you cannot read them if you do not bring the book close to you, hear it, the small words in blue letters say 'a subtle beautiful meditation' **sunday times**', the top third of the cover of the book is made up of black gothic scrip, it is undecipherable, maybe it spells out the word **venice**, but of this you cannot be sure so you imagine it to be venice, an illusion, a delusion, a damsel with a dulcimer, a shattered spell, the book is closed, but the cities are open to an eye, a city is visible, another city is seen, the words of a lover, an invisible lover who never went somewhere, who never went to a pleasure dome, a twisting memory, a city is always imperceptible, there is no word for the letters of the lover, the sterile is real, it is never touched or seen, it is not contained in a word.

Brett Beiles

Alms and the Man

On Thursdays the cops set up roadblocks
at eight pee-em at both ends of the road
past the bar, reports Brian the spliffed
Malawian car-guard, not yet too stoned
not to know what's potting.

So grateful patrons driving home
to the bosom of their families
go the scenic route past the mosque
across from the pub or the mansions
of the teetotallers who piss them off
as they clog the pub's car-park
prior to prostrations.

But Brian welcomes them with open palms
as after praying they're gracious with alms.

Nails in the Coffin

After clipping my nails
on the courtyard of the driveway,
the pale crescents glinted
on the tarmac.

Better sweep them up
in case the gardener due tomorrow
thinks I'm obnoxious,
leaving them lying there.

Gideon reads minutiae chapter and verse:
blades of grass, leaves of plants,
bark of trees, faeces of fruit bats,
the habits of formicidae ...

But behold! A miracle occurs;
to me it is,
though Gideon would have foretold.

On my return with brush and pan
in hands to remove the evidence,
a file of ants is carrying it away
CSI style (sans plastic bags)
each with an offcut bigger than itself

to an underground food processing plant
where one day all will be recycled.

The 10 Commandments 2011

From: Sarah-Jane Angel
Sent: 31 March 2011 01:47 PM
To: >Everyone
Subject: JAPAN – Interesting

Please continue to hold this in prayer ...

10 things to learn from Japan –

Sky News reported this a few days back:

1. THE CALM Not a single visual of chest-beating or wild grief ... (she goes on at length)
2. THE DIGNITY ... (etc)

new contrast

3. THE ABILITY ... (et al)
4. THE GRACE ... (and so on)
5. THE ORDER ... (and so forth)
6. THE SACRIFICE ... (and the like)
7. THE TENDERNESS ... (yada-yada)
8. THE TRAINING ... (yackety-yack)
9. THE MEDIA ... (more ellipses)
10. THE CONSCIENCE ... (you've got the picture)

With their country in the midst of a colossal disaster, the Japanese citizens can teach plenty of lessons to the world.

From: Brett Beiles

Sent: 31 March 2011 04:26 PM

To: Sarah-Jane Angel

Cc: >Everyone

Subject: Re: JAPAN – Interesting

In the midst of a colossal disaster,
it's encouraging that those

calm

dignified

able

gracious

orderly

tender

sacrificial

well-trained

media-responsible

conscientious

people

who rape the oceans and
plunder the jungles
did not loot their shops of

whale meat
dolphin 'tuna'
shark fins
live monkey ...
... oops! ...

This intra-blog
is sensitive
to sensitive readers.

While I learn from those
10 things (Commandments?)
from Japan

I'll continue to hold this in prayer
while you hold on to your halo
Ms Angel.

Michael Rolfe

On the requisite skill-set for being a tri-lingual Jewish stand-up comedian in Cape Town during the tourist season

1. Identify a lady in the audience who is from New York, as a vehicle for translating the Afrikaans jokes, even though 'Wanna play with the corn on my cob?' is but a pale shadow of the original.

(Although, I am afraid to say, he left her on her own to sort out his remarks about what happens to a gentleman's parts after swimming at Clifton as opposed to Muizenberg: *'Jy kan net die leeu se gesig en sy maanhare sien.'*)

Also, he neglected to explain why it would be funny if a cat were to say, *'Jou ma se person.'*)

2. With similar motives, identify a lady in the audience from Edinburgh, but retain your composure when she scolds you in Afrikaans for teasing another member of the audience.
3. Identify a gentleman in the audience from the Netherlands, so you can check if the fuzzy-hair jokes translate into Dutch.
4. Identify a Muslim couple in the audience both as a vehicle for:
 - a. circumcision jokes, and
 - b. to demonstrate to the lady from New York that you *can* talk to them.
5. Think on your feet. For example, when discussing what dogs sound like in the various different suburbs, and the Muslim lady says, 'We don't keep dogs,' be able to respond instantly, 'Yes, you do; you keep them chained up outside.'
6. Be able to re-cycle old material: point out that this is the same show you gave in Perth and Sydney and Melbourne to all the ex-South Africans, who brought their kids too, but the kids didn't get any of the jokes and couldn't understand your accent anyway.

7. End on a strong note:
 tell about meeting the black ex-South African couple in Perth
 who complained about how difficult it is to keep reliable help,
 what with the walkabout culture and everything.

Stalking the Muse

In the shower, sometimes, certainly,
 when your hands are too wet to write notes,
 and provided there's no queue on the landing
 pounding on the door and nagging,
 and provided also that the shower isn't having the effect
 of making you think that you can sing,
 which is the other thing that showers do,
 the Muse will visit with an idea.
 But you can't make this happen at will.

Walking on the mountain, sometimes, certainly,
 you round a corner, and the Muse awaits.
 But you can't make this happen at will,
 and it only works when you're alone,
 and getting mugged really de-rails your train of thought.

Sometimes, at night, when you're half asleep,
 or in the morning, when you're half awake,
 the Muse will tuck a note behind your ear,
 and you have to get up and transcribe it
 in writing that you later can't read.
 But this only happens sometimes,
 and you can't make it happen at will.

If you want to induce the requisite
 Zen-like trance-state at will,
 go and stand in the queue at ABSA Bank.

Damian Garside

The Nature of the Argument

There is a tree
I can see from my library window.

A simple tree. By
no means an exalted one that
a criminal might hang from.

Coincidentally, its
leaves have learnt to dance

there is harmony in how they
move together in the breeze,

which, without the leaves may
have cause to question its own meaning.

In my book this certain Frenchman is speaking in translation. Though
I am sure there is much insight here the
pages do not move collectively

at least not such as I can see. So

I slip into a comfortable, easy generalization,
persuading myself that stillness is
the default condition of every stack, every shelf.

Even if they were all
to lose their shackles, confer
like old,
ambling
philosophers,

party down. Or
cry out for
life, for
a redemption

a kind
of shuffle-coil salvation
from all that has been said, from
worlds said and done.

O

like vampires
before the light

like the
shy undead,

they do not wish to
be circumscribed, second-
guessed, decoded, deconstructed,
dragged from their beds when

much glued to the moment, their need, their craving is
to find simplicity, and
in that

infinity

a quiet music, where as
in my breeze, like
with my tree,

the notes flow. Where
we lose everything, things are
reborn, recycled and remade all in

the shadow, in
abhorrence of completion.

Gail Dendy

Mirror Image

The Kreepy-Krauly's clogged
and the swimming pool is filthy.
I bend over the side
and my double in the murk
reaches up towards me.

This is an invitation to touch hands
or perhaps rub noses.
She regards me dolefully,
her grey eyes so close to my blue ones

that I start in shock. *I know you,*
she seems to say, *every bit of you,*
but before I can match her
word for word, there's nothing left
except her watery cave
of slime and algae.

She visits me, sometimes,
in the bath, at night,
when just a candle lights the room
and the water smells of rose leaves.

I know you, she seems to say,
so loudly that I cover up
my breasts and am ashamed.

But I know her, too,
her wet and wily ways,
her slender, naked body
that mocks my thickened shape.

But my knife is out
and tonight's the night.
Trembling, with just one finger
on the bathplug's silver chain,
I lift it up with caution –
draw back in terror
as I see her do the same,

then watch her soften
beneath my grasp
as, with a single backward glance
at me, the reddening plughole, everything,
she dives right in,
and commits suicide by proxy.

The Flood

The land began filling up with water.
Strange, you say, *it shouldn't*
look like this. We tried

to bail it out. One bucket,
another. A thousand-million people
to make a chain.

My hands grew blisters
like small red roses
beginning to burst.
They shouldn't look like this,
you said.

It seemed the sky was drowning.
Lines of birds in loopy ribbons
zig-zagged here and there
looking for landings.
Below, houses appeared glassy,
were filled with bobbing fish.
Walls lost all particular meaning.

And now the quiet, although
immersed in water
it seems that one hears everything.
We could hear our own hearts beating.

And so the world ended
one unremarkable morning
while you were reading the smalls
in the daily papers.

As with all good chroniclers,
someone prepared an inventory –

One: water enough for all, the first time in human history;
Two: bright bobbing fish, hence a plentiful supply of food;
Three: a coming together of diverse species (never before attained);
Four: no racism (witness the fully communal swimming);
Five: neighbours in complete cooperation – an obvious evolution;
Six: perpetual holidays (no distinction between one day and the next);

and Seven, of course, the silence.
 This is the end of the world
 as we know it.

*It shouldn't
 look like this,* you said.

The Guided Tour of the Afterlife

Here there are no days off
 since work is optional, at best.
 People arrive mainly on their own,
 but occasionally in twos and threes
 and sometimes, I have to say,
 a whole lot more.

Nobody who belongs here
 ever leaves, and we like
 to think it's all a result
 of our very special care.

Music? There's plenty here
 to listen to. No, I'm afraid
 there's no G&T, and
 certainly no beer – sorry
 for that, but Management disapproves.

Tea? Any time you want,
 just say what suits.
 Right now there's only rooibos.
 Dance? Oh absolutely,
 but take care not to sweat.
 Opportunities for other exercise?

Well, the country here is mainly flat,
but a good, brisk walk is possible.

The light? Always the same,
never really hurts your eyes.
No rain, no storms. No mud
to caked the mat of your front door,
to tell you someone's home.

No mess, as when your husband
forgot to do the washing up.
No damp smells of laundry
on the porch. No cats to feed
or picking up their moulted whiskers
or sheathes of claws.
Carpets? Only red, you'll see,
but they all stay nice and clean.

What? All this sounds precise?
Too bloodless? Not at all familiar?
You don't like everyone
to dress the same?
Do I hear you right?
You *don't mind* aching bones
once in a while? You *like*
the salt-and-pepper in your hair,
your one foot smaller than the other,
that birthmark on your chin?
You'd give anything to see
a cake that flops?
A broken-hearted man?

This shocks me to the core.
I'll have to speak to Management.
What? You want me to verify
my status here?

You think I'm fake?
Well, I can tell *you*
a thing or two!
Just step this way.

Yes, I used to be
in that *other* place,
the one up there,
but I prefer it *here*.

Up there, everything was messy,
like you describe. Sheer chaos,
no rules, no uniformity.
People were allowed to be themselves
and so they just went wild.
Everyone had a *personality*.
Nothing was cut and dried.

Now, I like to have things
organised, and everything the same
from day to day.
I like hierarchy, and obedience,
and not to have to think.

So they kicked me out
and I came down here
and I've been here ever since.
I don't mind heat
and the humidity is rather nice.

Let me check your chart again:
Right day. Right time.
But *this* – this isn't right.
Aaaah, now I understand
your fondness for imperfection.
Now it's making sense.

Sorry, but you belong
in that *other* place.
I should've known this was a typo.
It's not the first, you see.
Just wait, a bus will come here
very soon to climb the hill,
unless it's broken down again.
This is an illustration
of how you can't rely on heaven.

But I warn you,
this is your final chance
to stay with us and be the same
as everybody else. What?
You're going then?
Well, good luck to you.
By the way, what job was that
you had on earth?
Of course – you were a poet.

Lara Kirsten

uit die resonante holtes

vir Linda, 'n koloratuur-sopraan

uit die resonante holtes
van haar lyf
breek die Stem oop
en sing oor die ganse aarde
die lied wat in drome klink
deur skeure breek
en in murg gaan sit

en nie laat los
 totdat dit liggaam vervorm
 tot transendentale beswyming

—

sy is kunstenaar van die keel –
 beeldhouer van die asem

sy is die toornares wat verse inkanteer
 totdat bloed en rugstring ontkiem
 uit sillabes en groei tot hierdie
 lyflike wonderwerk

—

haar stem brand met die feesviering van asem
 haar stem brand met die glinsterende kruine van golwe
 haar stem brand met die herinnering van premordiale frekwensies
 wat in ons oer-ore geklink het
 haar stem brand met die wete dat beide bitter en soet
 ewe gemaklik op die tong kan lê
 haar stem brand met die
 gechoreografeerde vlammespel
 wat in
 kolkende kontoere en kleure
 ons verrukking
 oopbreek

... hulle sê: *waarvan die hart vol is*
loop die mond van oor

klank-koors

ons vingers
skud die
sweet van
die klank-koors
oor die
gate van
ore wat
die toevoer
is na
die ondergrond
van julle
siele
die kwiksilwer
in die
buis van
julle monde
breek oop
met die
druk hitte
van die
ontmaskerende koorstigtelikheid
van klank

Robert Edward Bolton

Pantheon

Rome, September 2009

And have they papered your drum today
with the gold candy of kings,
with the millennial cellophane
of grave cardinals,
the bricabrac of popes?

And is this paradiddle
at the diaphragm of architects
(the flam-tap, the rimshot
of the leopard-clad house-major,
of the eye which looks the lion alive)
to be suppressed
on one tribe's petulant behalf?

You were the voided sphere. You knew,
standing here, you were the hollow locus
about which the boldly all
and tactless ungone swung,
the dark and unbusked terminus,
the gypsied absence
and the protoword,
the finalfirst and unsung mastertype

and every name
 was cowboy to your stirrup
and any jackal's son
 could kick the gas.

Broken like a tooth, I could no longer sustain an existence unweighted either by the sciences of two-sticks-and-a-sinew or the misheard metaphors tightening at my son's

gullet, so I assumed for an hour that it was possible (in my left palm) or permissible (under the crop of my right) to be standing – with my broken teeth and cardboard armour – outside of myself. Let the blind tenor howl, let his yellow hound suckle gods, and let garlic-cloves be sold in the markets again for the fair balance of a lived day's sweat. Were ever the scales unweighed by heavy superstitious fingers? Will ever you emerge, younger twin, from the cavities of your tennessee-soothed imperfection? Fall again from the lightless eye to cold stone floors, vacant niches, profane altars and this sphere's empty and authentic ambivalence?

I will decorate your cornices
with no martyr's lymph,
will pass over, with no angel's bone,
your recent papal threshold.
But while the calves are penned
in maritime corrals,
the veal unslaughtered
in an old fall reprieve

I will wait and

I will wait and

I will be waiting

for my old hippie bull
whose throat is fresh
to the blade,
who hangs heavy
and low
and long
to the rutting soil.

Oliver Price

Hermit

oakleaves break loose
sing separate songs

old ousted elands seek solitary paths
unfriend all

not a shoal fish trapped in stone
but a god in a shrine
ring your self

sweep the minefield of love
tiptoe through it

Lucretia Pretorius

Magic

Times I go
to a hill I found
where wind caresses
long fair grass
as soft as hair,
and there is a tree
I lean against.

Spirit within
rising

new contrast

knows the presence
in the tree;
that is my sisters'
hair that blows.

Lovers, sisters
I visit, then
come away,
an ancient singing
magic
stirring.

Ruben Mowszowski

Report from Hotel Infinity

From: Prof. E. Scher
To: Alfred Deutz
Subject: report

Dear Alfred

As you are aware, the exchanges that have taken place between us of late were precipitated by an email which I received from a certain Dr Ludwig Vim, a person previously unknown to me, but who might have known James, though even that is uncertain. In an attempt to sort out some of the confusion I have placed the various correspondences in chronological sequence though, given the new discoveries in quantum tunneling, even that may be questionable. For professional reasons I have changed some of the names, but since you once told me your private life is an open book, I have left yours as is.

And yes, you do look rather charming in the picture.

Best wishes,
James

Letter 1. LV/JS

From: Dr. Ludwig Vim
To: James Scher
Subject: infinity

James,

Here is the extract that I mentioned to Ronny.

Suppose someone wanting a room turns up at the check-in counter of Hotel Infinity. The hotel has an infinite number of rooms numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, and so on forever, but all of them are occupied. No problem at all. The manager asks the guest in room 1 to move to room 2, the guest in room 2 to move to room 3, and so on. This leaves room 1 vacant for the new arrival and everyone still has a room.

Please give my best to your wife.

Ludwig Vim

Letter 2. ES/LV

From: Prof. E. Scher
To: Dr. Ludwig Vim
Subject: Re: infinity

Dear Ludwig,

Infinity mathematics is not my forte, but my Athenian colleague Pythagoras assures me that no establishment worthy of the name *Infinity* would have rooms numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, and so on without having also rooms numbered -1, -2, -3, -4, and so on in that direction as well. Combining a finite beginning with an infinite end like the Hebrews have done is, he says, like having your baklava and eating it...ad infinitum. He says the idea is unlikely find any adherents outside that small group

of desert nomads as it is an epistemological contradiction and makes no sense mathematically.

Sincerely,
James Scher

PS My wife returns your kind regards.

Letter 3. LV/R

From: Dr. Ludwig Vim
To: Ronny
CC: Prof. E. Scher
Subject: apologies

Ronny,

I must apologize that I said to James I had met you. I had confused you with a friend of Alfred Deutz who I had met at a conference – also called Ronny. My colleague had incorrectly identified you as that person, but was meaning you. Do you see where the confusion lies? By some chance might not I have offended James by asking after his wife? My computer has given me problems in recent days. That is why I haven't replied to you earlier.

Sincerely,
Dr. Ludwig Vim

Letter 4. JR/LV

From: James Rechs
To: Dr. Ludwig Vim
Subject: Re: apologies

Dear Dr. Vim,

I hope you do not find this communication written in James's absence too forward of me. Of course you do not offend James. The fact is, since our meeting at Dual Congress in Baden-Baden, James and I have been inseparable, not only because our interests are mirrored, but also because we find each other's company congenial. Having the same first name simply adds to the *jeu à deux* of the relationship. Nevertheless, to avoid confusion James has taken a 'professional' first name. (The initial 'E', you will undoubtedly have noted, is a rebus for the Hebrew word '*echad*'.)

Please convey my best wishes to Alfred.
James

P.S. I attach a communication that I received from Ronny this morning.

Letter 5. R/JR attached to letter 4

From: Ronny
To: James Rechs
Subject: Re: infinity

Dear James,

Here is a communication I received from Prof. James Scher. I have not a clue what it is about. He has clearly confused me with another person of the same name. Perhaps you might be able to pass it on to the intended recipient.

Sincerely,
Ronny

Letter 6. LV/ES

From: Dr. Ludwig Vim
To: Prof. E. Scher
Subject: infinity

James,

I fear I am getting absentminded in my advancing years. My assistant was checking through my correspondence and discovered that I had sent Ronny an email intended for you. I must apologize because it was my reply to your reply.

Apologies also on the confusion that I may have caused, because it seems that you weren't informed that I would be making contact. Of course your hypothesis is positive, but I think you have confused Cantor's intention as infinity isn't a number, rather it's the concept of something larger or greater than any number. Cantor accepted that his model didn't take into being negative numbers, but it did lead to the work of Zermelo, Fraenkel and Skolem. But this is just for the academic record,

because you rightly pointed out the flaw in Cantor's metaphor which many 'adults' wouldn't see but every 'child' would. Alfred Deutz struck the same problem when he was teaching at Oslo University. I found a recent picture of Alfred when I first met him. Perhaps you have seen it before. It is a very flattering picture I believe.

Give my regards to your wife,

Sincerely yours,
Ludwig

Letter 7. ES/LV

From: Prof. E. Scher
To: Dr. Ludwig Vim
Subject: Re: infinity

Dear Ludwig,

Thank you for your explanations and kind comments. While the mathematics is interesting, my interests tend to be more in the space-time sector. Heisenberg's uncertainty tells us that to the photon of light, not only are the star and the astronomer's eye one place, but all places are one place, ergo all time is one time, and, of course this nothing less than Panofsky's synonymy, but now I'm veering out of your field into medieval scholasticism!

Sincerely,
James Scher

PS My wife returns your kind regards.

Oh, I forgot to thank you for that picture you sent of Alfred. He really does look very fetching. And sorry to bore you with my architectural nonsense. I'm sure you haven't the slightest interest in it.

Letter 8. LV/ES

From: Dr. Ludwig Vim

To: Prof. E. Scher

Subject: infinity

James,

I believe I have completed my initial thinking for the project! Finally! This is a cause for a celebration! I will send my workings to Alfred Deutz for checking immediately! You must tell your wife! I feared I would never ride the horse! Now that I have calmed down, I must tell you how I discovered it. Firstly though, I would like to thank you for taking the time to reply. Of course you do not bore me. Indeed, I am looking forward to reading your report. While you say that your interests are more in the quantum-time sector, might I be so upfront to propose that the mathematical work of Zermelo, Fraenkel and Skolem gave rise to the notion of the continuum, which is at the apple core of our very existences and not very different to your interests. My project is very humble, the fruits small, the answer always elusive. Nevertheless, let me tell you how I arrived at the railway station. I was eating my breakfast, which my assistant had prepared for me, and I was reading the letters of Groddeck, when I found my mind drifting and I was reminded of the joke that Alfred Deutz often tells:

Fermat tried to do it in the margin, but couldn't fit it in.

I found myself helplessly laughing and thi

Letter 9. JS/JR

From: Prof. James Scher
To: James Rechs
Subject: Re: infinity

Dear James,

I think we may have reason to celebrate. To test Cantor I booked into Hotel Infinity and, predictably, even though it was full, I was given room 1 (though it did require rather a lot of shuffling.) On entering the room, I experienced a strong *déjà vu* of the type that Jung talks about when he describes going into a library he had earlier dreamed about, and in it finding a book he had found in the dream, in which was an account of the exact event he was presently experiencing. On a hunch, I pulled out the photograph that Ludwig had sent me and, as I suspected, the room I was standing in was none other than Alfred Deutz's room down to the books on the bookshelf!

Here is the photograph.

Love,
James

PS: Why don't you join me at the Hotel Infinity? We will have all eternity to work on our relationship and still be back in time for the start of the second semester!



Alfred Deutz

The Immortal Baby

In my travels in India I have noticed that the gods, as depicted, seem to be getting younger and younger, becoming children even. Yet they display none of the incompetence normally associated with this stage of life. Could it be that what we in the west call adulthood is neither inevitable nor even desirable, but simply a falling from grace?

J.S. _____ School of Oriental Studies, Liverpool

Although much had changed since the freedom, the town where Kora lived had remained deeply embedded in the colonial dreamscape of its recent past. Those aspects of change that did not fit in with the traditional pattern of life were simply ignored. On warm summer evenings couples continued to stroll along the promenade gazing at the ships, blue-tinted dowagers wandered between hairdresser, café and endless card game, and the ladies of the night plied their craft as they had always done, only now more openly. As a dark-skinned woman not belonging to any particular social or ethnic group, Kora liked this world where she felt simultaneously invisible and at home.

Until she became pregnant that is, and then her life changed utterly. For a start, people noticed her. More than that. They were affected by her. When she entered the supermarket the mood lifted instantly. If two friends had been arguing about what brand of tinned soup to buy, they now agreed. The woman who always prodded every chicken, now bought the first one she touched. The store manager, always overworked, laughed publicly for the first time.

That she had been with child for longer than usual seemed to go entirely unnoticed. When she passed nine, ten and then eleven months without giving birth people simply assumed they had got their dates wrong.

Kora herself seemed undisturbed by it. She had developed a habit of saying, 'When the baby is ready it will make an appearance'. She had more faith in the forces of nature than in the certainties of doctors so she had long stopped going to the clinic. The only personal friend she had was an aging Indian professor who lived next door to the small apartment that her employer had rented to her.

Mr Godvinda was nearing sixty, but he had been preparing for his death for the last forty years. 'If one is not going to produce a child into

the world – and I most certainly am not,’ he would say, ‘then what is the point in staying around?’ He would have ended his life long ago if his employers had not always asked him to do something else just as he was on the brink of it. ‘Take your own time,’ he advised Kora. ‘Don’t let these so-called doctors rush you into fulfilling their particular expectations. I guarantee not one of them knows the first thing about philosophy.’

He had a face which had been formed out of the exasperation of someone who is always dealing with lesser minds. His father, a devout Marxist, had frowned on any sign of playfulness as a result of which his son had never learned to laugh. People naturally kept their distance. In fact, prior to meeting Kora he had not made a single friend.

Despite his irritation at conversation always turning to the Orient in his presence, it was the one subject which he invariably introduced. He was appalled at the interest of Westerners in gurus and ‘so-called’ holy men. ‘Frauds and charlatans,’ he called them. Like a talisman warding off evil, or, in his case, the irrational, he kept a bust of Bertrand Russell on his desk, all of which went unnoticed by Kora who saw him simply as rather kindly man pretending to be otherwise.

One night Kora dreamed that she was standing at the gate of a walled garden and that a child inside was calling her. When she awoke she knew it was time.

At the hospital she was given a medical card which she filled in as best as she could. In the section allowed for the duration of the pregnancy she entered sixteen months. An examination however revealed that the physical development of the child was exactly what one would expect at normal full term and she was admitted into the labour ward.

After the birth, the obstetrician, who had been at the end of a four day duty roster, remembered that there had been no umbilicus to cut, and the nurses that there had been no placenta. Discussing the matter in the canteen afterwards, they decided it had been a shared hallucination bought on by general exhaustion. The paediatrician who had had a full night’s sleep, maintained that the newly-born infant had winked at him and then smiled, but this was recorded as wind even though the child had not consumed anything yet.

Nor, it seemed, did it consume anything after. While it declined to take the breast, its weight remained constant and medical tests established

that it was in perfect health. So Kora, whom some thought had been secretly feeding it, was allowed to go home and a note was made on her card that a social worker should call on her at some future date.

In the meantime her employer had engaged another cleaner and the small room which Kora had rented from him was no longer available. Mr Godvinda made space in his apartment by squeezing himself into a corner of his study and gave his bedroom over to them. He found that when he was in the baby's presence his loneliness disappeared and he experienced something that, if he had not been such a sceptic, he might have described as a kind of grace. Catching sight of an unfamiliar expression in the mirror, he realized that he had learned to smile.

As word got around, people started to turn up at the apartment to see the child. Initially the visitors would take turns to hold it while Mr Godvinda served tea, but later, when there were too many of them, the baby was placed on a cushion in the centre of the room and the visitors sat around hoping for the smile that would, it had been rumoured, transform their lives.

Kora and Mr Godvinda both seemed to know exactly what to do for the baby's comfort since it had never been heard to cry. Nor did they suffer from disturbed sleep. The infant maintained the same equanimity at night as it did during the day.

Eventually a social welfare officer called by. Confused by the unusual development of the child, the officer called for a paediatrician who declared that the health of the baby was satisfactory, but there must have been an error in the recording of its birth date which he put back by twelve months.

Mr Godvinda started receiving social invitations from people who had previously ignored him, but with the numbers of people wishing to see the baby he was too busy taking care of the visitors. Lacking a direct source of information, a rumour went round that he was a monk who had abandoned his celibacy to father a child. Another had him as a philosophy lecturer who had lost his job through interfering with one of his students.

At around this time Kora celebrated her sixtieth birthday. Over the next few years, as successive doctors examined the child and adjusted its birth date forward to correspond with its physical development, or

backwards to reflect its mental development, Kora began to build a reputation as the nation's oldest new mother.

Eventually the press got hold of it and reports of a postmenopausal birth appeared in the Sunday papers together with suggestions that something unusual was happening to people who visited the child. One person, for instance, reported that he had a series of prophetic dreams after holding the baby. Another, that his business had been saved from inevitable bankruptcy. Yet another, that she had remembered a long-forgotten telephone number when the baby smiled at her.

As the word spread, an increasing number of visitors occupying important positions began to turn up at the small apartment. Among them was the wife of the Secretary to the Minister for _____, who announced that she had for the first time experienced a sense of purpose in her life, following which the Minister himself paid them a visit, although it was, he stressed, in his private capacity only.

As a result of this visit the couple received a call from the Secretary for Ministerial Engagements requesting that they close their apartment to all visitors on a particular day when they were to expect a visit from a 'very senior person' who turned out to be none other than the Head of State. A tall serious man, he sat for a long time alone in the room with the child and left looking strangely troubled. He returned several more times and the day after his final visit, made a rambling and somewhat incoherent speech on television about a new vision for the world. The idea of the national state, he said, was based on fear. The walls around nations were similar to those that formed around individuals. National boundaries were enforced among humans yet ineffectual against birds, insects and other animals. The arrogance of the human species stemmed from an overvaluing of physical power. The greatest power, he said, the power of imagination, was in the possession of the child. What we call adulthood, he went on to say, would one day be as obsolete and outmoded as aristocracy was now, allowing us to live in a world without borders where all possibilities were open to us. He used phrases like 're-imagining ourselves' which were quite uncharacteristic of him and of the stern political terminology he had always favoured.

The newspapers had a field day with economists registering alarm at the eighty point drop in the Dow Index and the flight of money from

the national currency. A few days later it was announced that the Head of State had resigned for medical reasons put down to the presence of a previously unidentified disease characterised by irrational episodes and for the same reasons all decisions made by him during the last three months were declared non *compus mentorus*.

Interest in the baby now suffered a sudden decline since its presence was somehow linked with the former statesman's malaise, as if reality itself had become contaminated by his supposed psychosis. People continued to call at the apartment, but the numbers diminished until all who were left were a few regulars: the janitor of the apartment block in which Kora had lived, two old ladies who spent their time reminiscing about the mail ship to England, a pedicurist who ran a dating service for lonely people by telephone from her apartment upstairs. These people came more for Mr Godvinda's refreshments than out of interest in the child, and when the professor disappeared they stopped coming too.

There were suggestions that Kora had become pregnant again and was about to give birth, but when after a few months the reports changed to those of a mid-term condition and then, after a further period, to her being in early pregnancy only, they were assumed to have been without substance. At around this time the baby ceased to be mentioned at all and Kora recovered her former invisibility.

And Mr Godvinda? One report spoke of him having gone to Leeds to take up a chair in philosophy having been forgiven his previous indiscretion. Another had him returning to India to join a movement dedicated to the worship of the immortal infant 'manifest and non-manifest'. Devoted as the movement was to the cultivation of holy ignorance, there was little that could be said about it, if indeed it existed. The only evidence remaining that Mr Godvinda had once been a friend of Kora was the high forehead and rational gaze of Lord Russell on her window ledge.

Rachel Paton

A Descriptive Analysis of Two White Chameleons

(in white words)

There they are.

Look at them.

They are:

Rough

Delineated

Female

Human

Two

In part

Aroused

And Thrumming

Exhibited

Thigh to Spine

and Naked-eyed

With alcohol-induced inhibitions aching

Smoke-screen'd

Green-limb'd

Slow moving

In rhythm

Lit by the Curator's light

Arranged according to the Designer's sight

Insides Inverted

Eyes Averted

Fighting to stay lucid enough

To see one another

Above

Each Other

to stay in breath
 in space
 Together
 and
 Insane enough
 To Allow
 some other creature
 Close enough to kill

Kerry Hammerton

Rhondda Valley

At the face – at the seam,
 sometimes you will see
 the feathered hand of a fern,
 crushed between the immense

plates of the earth. At night,
 hunkered in a tin bath, black
 water eddying around me,
 the clouded moon and stars cast

shadows that keep me awake.
 I dream of great-grandchildren,
 great-great grandchildren –
 unknobbed by a miner's

arthritic bend – on the other
 side of this world, beneath
 a strong sky, an open sun.
 The wind tumbling clouds

into an impossible blue ocean.

 In the morning
I stand in line to tattoo another
layer of dust into my skin.

We have led ourselves

to me, here,
where southern right whales
breach the ending of winter,

and to you, there,
where summer days end
deep into the night.

To me, you are a lone swan
circling on a storm-filled lake,

but maybe that's me,

and you are a screeching
hateda in my garden
that flaps and startles at every sound,

or maybe that is me.

I check the weather report,
and only in September,
and only on certain days,

sombre days,

do we seem to inhabit the same world.

Daddy's Girl

The short walk up the little hill from the beach
saps you.

I am the one who carries
the umbrella and the cooler-box,
your chair
clutched under my arm.

Your broken wings
poke through all the layers
you are wearing this summer:
vest, long sleeved cotton shirt, jersey.

Yesterday I flew on your shoulders,
ready to do battle in the swimming pool;
danced on magic stilts you
cobbled together from old paint
cans and bits of string.

Now your blurring eyes settle
on me
for affirmation.

Tom Byrne

[untitled]

tell us a memory oh uncle dear
a story of glory and improbable cheer
a tale of a snail in the stratosphere
or a legend of bears cavorting up the back stairs

very well, i shall tell of a moon lit lad
whose road races with clown faces are pitifully sad
whitewash of whispers through battles he's fought
impeaching his teachers keeps him terribly taught

his journey is wayward his course gone askew
from inhaling the vapors and sipping the dew
his visions are rosy with dreams of delight
full of creatures so cosy they comfort the night

the seat of his soul has a bare patch or two
his angels are idle or consumptive with flu
hand full of plans are subject to stress
a flurry of gestures his lips can't express

his cat is an owl with four rabbits feet
the moon a rice cracker treacly treat
upside the down side the dune of time shifts
he drifts near, he drifts far from his spiritual gifts

Tendai Mwanaka

In This Sea

I would swim in the cup of this moon.
 An ambient sea imaging around me.
 Toll sighs clinging to my darkling skin.
 The white-wind neighing above this sea.
 Returning to haunt me, again and again.
 The luminous flames of my distant past.

‘No!’ They would never leave me alone.
 I listened to the soothing voice within them.
 The bell of a wandering cow in winter,
 Like the moaning toll of a furrowing plough.
 And it told me only this long story,
 I am the sound and only soul in this sea.

Aisling Heath

Last Skin

I am down to my last skin,
 the tight grip of time pulls the child within,
 the strain of endless passion shows on my thighs,
 waning lust glares between your sighs.

I am down to my last skin,
 I feel it pull me slowly in.
 It screams at me of dreams I've sold,
 tells me that my ambitions are old.

I am down to my last skin,
the one they want to trap me in,
mother wise, and succulent wife,
I hold the rope, they hold the knife.

I am down to my last skin,
the one our soul was held within.
Borne between my knees, my precious child,
I stroke my sagging marks, still hot and wild.

I am down to my last skin,
the one I want to wrap you in.
To feel your need as we kiss,
as you hold my voice tight in your fist.

I am battle weary and soldier sore,
it feels like Aisling is no more.
So if this really is my last skin,
It is yours, my love, to hold me in.

Jelly

My soft belly, round doughnut shaped, pillowesque, fluffy moulded cushion is a place of rest for the many men in my home. Archie, purrs towards me, wraps his tail around my leg, eyes my belly sleepily and tramps his way across it into a peaceful purring slumber.

The other two felines looking on wantonly.

My babe he wakes, hazy eyed, bedhead, arms outstretched and nuzzles his soft strawberry curls into my love handles making his way back to the safe spot laying his head by my belly button.

My love moulds my breast in his hand, rubs the side of my thigh in anticipation, licks his lips and rounds his palm across my jelly belly as it wobbles next to him.

Seven Redform

Seized

Watch that sun rolling on Sea-upon-Street setting,
The bush of African violet flowers is almost dark and fireflies go hunting,
you've only this hour to blind the bees.

The guests are arriving in dribs and drabs,
a door is ajar.
That cat is resting for a few minutes.
Long ears of the grey donkey are dominating soil in the neglected
kitchen garden.
An ambulance is rushing her to casualty.

Traffic jam.
Commuters stare at every shadow of the hawkers melting away,
I'm going places.

Faces painted on public wall of canvasses are still white,
such is bank holiday,
bank holiday is the reflection of driving mirror.

Something is ahead of me,
the streetlights radiate
from the old age I wear,
I'm not looking back at those seed case of chrysalis.
Late Monday, October third.
Outside my window, wave after wave of cold sea splashes
against edges of the framed picture,
washing away debris rioters have left behind,
the next train to Salt Street is passing by.

I'm looking through the cold glass window.
Fear emerges from the packed ice in the graveyard,

there acacia bushes and beds of cabbages run,
there all distances close up in mirage,
a kiss on the cheek,
I'm munching sandwiches, still waiting for you.

Marí Peté

Scribed

it's dark here in jasmine scent
wooden slats are semi-drawn

the garden holds its breath:

enclosed in swirls of orange light
a long, fine brush dips in black ink

writes rhythmically from right to left

a silent pledge on ivory curves
from coccyx to the base of neck

Julia Kramer

Cassia

she places each paw with exquisite care
stealth in her bone and marrow
eyes aglow, whiskers twitch
the pigeon explodes
in a puff of feathers
a delicate pink tongue grooms every hair
licks at the corner of her mouth
and smug, sated, she curls into herself
paws tucked in,
a final flick of her tail
to embellish the snail shape ...
Cassia
tabby cat

Death of a Dikkop

Wind tore strips off the feeble winter sun
The dikkop found no refuge
From its claws and teeth
As the night froze into dawn
She succumbed
To the greedy arms of death
Her speckled feather skirt
Sequinned with frost crystals

Nightjar

when shadows bleed indigo
staining the bleached winter slopes
night shrugs on her shawl studded with stars
and the nightjar flies into the maw
of the night
without a sound her flight
come, she calls
come fly away with me
and I'll teach you the nightjar's song

Eleni Philippou

Of You

Xristoforos

Your emotions
are sparse as sparrow feathers,
light and grey.

Your exquisite heart –
exquisite,
for I chose it –
will always be elsewhere,
for you give
less than little:
nothing.

You are named after the patron saint of journeys.
 A traveller, a pilgrim,
 an intricate image on a horse.
 Yet you do not traverse
 the leaf green geography
 of intimacy.
 You do not bend
 the road
 in the direction of my heart.

We are a strange pair:
 You who has only the name of a traveller,
 with the complexion of winter –
 ivories, creams, whites.
 And I, a child of foreign climes,
 coloured like various heavy summers
 across the world.

Perhaps,
 I drain you
 of your vibrancy:
 the theatricality
 of my eyebrows
 sapping you
 with their black audacity;
 the dark performance of my eyes
 stripping
 the fine blue threads
 that compose your iris-tapestry;
 the thick smoothness
 of river silt skin
 depleting the embankments
 of your chest's bleached side.

I seem a cruel corrosive process.

Perhaps then,
I have misunderstood you:
mistaking
your subjugation
for indifference,
for uncomplicated apathy;
not the quiet sense
of something lost

Vasilis

In the grey London light,
you sleep on the white decking,
in the narrow hallway
beneath the stairs.

Steps and creak,
the light wood-break
of the banister.

It stirs you:
arms break out like waves,
and hands of ships
search for the open shore
of my arms, my elbows, my knees.
You reach out
to touch me:
the vigour of discovery.

And I, afraid that
you are submerged
in realm of dreams,
unconscious of your actions,
draw back.

Like a tiny mottled sea-crab
 pulling inwards,
 closing into
 its tapered spiral shell.

That tentative gesture in which the white palm
 of your tired hand rests on my shoulder
 bobs like a small boat,
 moving us neither forwards, nor backwards.
 We stay in sight of the shore,
 watching the flick and dart of tiny fish
 collecting at the barnacled prow.

Eventually, night falls, and we awake finding
 that we have drifted into a new Aegean.
 Now you finger the turquoise stones
 untidily braided into the black coastlines of my hair,
 twirling them ever so slightly.
 It means.

Request

Correspond within
 the tidal break, your want.
 Chalk stone solitude
 slakes into sea ducts. Dissolves.
 Chaos in the white-foamed churn,
 chumming waters,
 the heave and hurl of chests,
 aspirated breaths.
 Unwind,
 by broken boat rope,

complacency,
drag buoys of
sensitive laughter
to the vast fields of washed up kelp.
It can live there
in the green quietness.

Ebb away no
that you.
To resist aloneness,
flow away compromise.
Agitate,
that uninterrupted for
to un-order of disruption to you
To your see,
I the me.
Wave upon wave. Beat at your cannot expression, a must
swims into the silver-slit shoals of
your tender words.
Emotions there pull current cross and perpetual
I that me unrests the ocean bed,
Wash away politeness,
you and this. An ocean us.

Your mouth settles like sand,
on the clean dune of my face.
I blow it away
with white squalls of words,
gulls of gasps,
the whirr wing-beat
of young seabirds.
Into glazed green rocks,
serrated pools,
collects this ocean

of human residue.
Hooks, rope, net.

The thick thread of gravity
tugs at the ocean's body,
drags it away
from the beach's breast.

You wait patiently
for the next tide,
for my embrace.

Antonis

I look out the window
at the autumn russet
of red-stone chimneys
and tilted grey skies.
With this industrial dawn,
your hair seems dull,
eyelid droops.

That left eye,
copper-coloured
and round as a disk,
never quite focuses,
but it lingers. On me.

Woven linen
tangled ochre thread,
A noose of Indian twine
and pattern.

In strip and pull,
I know that eye.

Like children
showing picture books
to each other,
so we expose our frailties.

You bring me here
to this place of new journeys,
the pinprick
centre
of an iridescent iris.

It begins in
the delicate curve
of your eyebrow
collapsing
into the eye's bone chamber.
Each lid bowing
to the authority
of my breath.

A break in
the temporary moment.

That breath.
It out.
Just listen.
It out.

Your lower lip
 speaks its way to my eye.
 I blink
 blue-black,
 brown-braided,
 pupil-bound.
 You blink back.
 It is the language.

Converse
 the beckon-beat half
 -words
 of this
 this this
 There.

Into the clean flesh curve
 of my ear.

Speak.
 Slow to the body,
 beat heart
 be placed to
 beat heart over.
 Internal symmetry,
 eye to eye
 a mirror reflect
 brought you
 wide and full about
 syllable bright
 and vowel-vying.
 Seen.
 Heard.
 Un-modulated.

That breath.
 It out.

Just listen.
It out.

I slip onto you.
Like a ring,
In rough-rusted,
earth-encrusted,
baked in the
shard-soak
of the day-in,
day-out.

Down-worn,
accustomed to
the inflections
of your voice's
saw-dust and metallic.

Break and turn,
the shut-eye.
Not a ring that binds.

You, Unknown

Sliding
knee tight, stretched skin
and elbow taut
into the
slip-in. It leans lower.
How deeply interior
each word –
the promise of good –
rests in the centre

of my imagination.
Fertile and big.

It's always only as far as you.

Breathe soft as wilted stalks,
bent with heat.
My voice twists,
like passages of time.

This me,
and swallow petals,
botanical and neat.
It's not found in there –
the next one then.
Of someone lovers.

While the flowers,
heliotropic,
turn away,
I feel the next bloom.
Its fingers,
the petal thighs,
pastel pinks,
impressionist mauves.
In there.
I feel the inward blossom,
flow deepest of convincing
wet from early morning drizzle,
between so and so
and to
the heart.
The skin
transparent lies close.
This point hard, crease-crumple.
Flower face,

coronas and aureoles,
in-tilted. Unopened.

Time breathes into
the bound-up nodule
of the Spring-breaking
branch. Slight beyond last
the brittle of fingers,
the now-time,
as I hope
for another you.

April 1994

The tide was high,
and full of bluebottles.
We were afraid to cross.
It would have sucked us
into sandbanks, and inlets
deep into the Transkei.
The place of homeland chiefs
and bright emerald greens.
The Africa of tin and drum,
slow anger, steady hum.

My mother shouted,
'Philip, Philip! The girls.
They're going to be swept away.'

It stops there,
this memory.
At that very point
where he turns around,

through the umbrellas
 and floral bags,
 sun-shone light,
 to give all he can.

At her shout. At her fear,
 that we
 are always
 just about
 to be swept away.

Patricia Schonstein Pinnock

Madonna of Child Soldiers

She spreads a cloth
 woven from white tobacco-twine
 for a sabbath meal
 of maize-bread and black tea
 to serve the boy-warriors
 on this single night of armistice.

Plucking at mbira
 she draws them in like moths
 to the pale of an oil lamp.

All are barefoot and naked but for weaponry.

She ties about their necks
 talismans of bottle tops and beads
 urges them to lay down bandoliers
 releases them from the thrall of war

and lets them rest awhile
before the battle cry shrills again
from the escarpment.

Matabele lament to the Virgin Mary

Operation Murambatsvina, Zimbabwe 2005

Oh, he is weeping-weeping
Meri,
there at the back of the store,
his arms and legs are crushed
and he'll walk no more.

He calls with the sound of an owl
Meri,
haunting me in my sleep,
for his children were taken by armed men
and his panic is deep.

He wakes me from my slumbering
Meri,
when the moon is white and high,
I sense his last breath and listen
to grasses sway and sigh.

Oh, now I am weeping-weeping
Meri,
men circle with pangas to fight,
the dark of regime is potent
in this weak morning light.

Johan Geldenhuys

The Soon Return – Part 7

(Continued from Issue #155)

Omnipresence then shone
its beacon in experiments that proved
contemporaneous events were done
in cases where they were so far removed

from one another that contiguously
they could cohere only by being there
all round. At one such rally of a sea
of friendly faces Jess suffered a scare

of magnitudes beyond apostles' dreams
when members of the crowd surrounded him,
insisting mathematical regimes
should be explained by which a finite string

of numbers is obtained, renormalising
infinite by dividing both sides
of an equation – somewhat scandalising
science – with two eternities. 'Elides

the one the other is the simple answer,
to give nothing as at the start,' sang Jess,
glancing at the advancing fans askance
as Matthew moved to grab him from the mess

ununderstanding men had caused. 'The world's
a great idea consisting of the thoughts
of souls so that whatever is unfurled's
the sole reality,' with snorts

scratching his ears, Jesse. 'What is concrete?'
demanded one in black. 'Nothing and all,'
stepped in St John. 'We have to be discreet,'
came in Jesse, directing at the tall

and lean leader of black troops further words
of wisdom, 'pitch our message at the ranks
in different guises. Some will like the curds,
others the whey, and some only the tanks

in which the milk is kept. A few will like
and drink milk straight.' 'Exactly as perverts
always must congregate to lick a dike,'
shot back the lengthy one. 'We need converts

and not such mockers as you are,' said Mark
indignantly. 'Don't worry, dear, the man
is merely taking you all for a lark,
spinning about some strands of verbal spam

to prove words prove whatever can be said,
are not to be trusted and better left
alone,' was interjected by a red-
haired black. 'The very fact that you are deft

with words disproves your saying words can live
lives of their own. Your thinking's make them real,'
was interjected by Jesse, 'and give
the run of sentences direction. Steal

no thoughts from me, for all men are all things
and everything is interlinked in spheres
appearing to the likes of you as rings
or merely outer shells, since what inheres

cannot be touched, tortured, incarcerated
or killed.’ At this a man stepped up and grabbed
Jesse in a vice-like grip, which soon grated
all present. Matthew and Marcus then nabbed

the perpetrator to little avail,
as they themselves were gripped by other arms
clad in ubiquitous dark. ‘Try to hail
Maggie and May that they can raise alarms

all over,’ Lucas keened. The vice-grip crushed,
one Benedict Quisling, while all the rest,
including gawking John, were brusquely brushed
aside. ‘Don’t be dismayed. This is my quest

and I shall take it to my end,’ called Jess
as he was bundled in a van. The others
stood stunned, but John took up in a caress
the cracking casts and cares of his soul brothers

through comforting when Mag and May arrived
too late to see the great events. ‘Regime,
you have started your last. We always strived
to keep your laws,’ Matt uttered in a scream,

‘but now you desecrated ours.’ The crowds
dispersed like water off a camel’s back
and only Mag and May remained with rowds
in Ioannes, Lucas, Marcus and black

brother Matthew because his mood lacked tint
and tincture. ‘Where have they taken my son?’
enquired May dispirited. A glint
leaping into the air announced the sun

was changing tack. The mountains stood apart from human habitation. 'Please console his mother, May, for can't you see her smart and suffer greatly?' begged Maggie: 'My role

will be to track Jesse through my contacts while all of you must reassure the friends, including May.' 'We'll do that, bro. The facts, however, speak against, in fact subtends

the grounds from under us,' sighed John. The men watched Maggie go, protecting weeping May against herself. Night was forming a pen in which their shadow-selves were forced to stay

against the rising of the sun. Jesse had been received unceremoniously and slammed into an empty cell in wee hours of morning light forming idly

into another day, promptly darkened by his interrogators in a room deeper inside the fort. His body hearkened for sustenance. The first man held a broom

stick, prodding Jess on questioning. 'Your group – how large is it? And give me names.' Jess did, defining it as those within the loop of friends and family. 'Before you hid

out from the law and why was that?' Quite puzzled Jessie denied all knowledge of such acts, only to get a smack. The second nuzzled in closer, asking him again. 'Just facts –

if you were innocent, why hide away?’
 ‘I did not hide, but merely steered a course
 away from yours. Remaining in the bay
 of politics you did not see the source,

the ever-widening sea, on which I sailed
 across your darkening horizon.’ ‘Hell,
 the dog is speaking poetry,’ was wailed
 in mockery by first. ‘You are a shell,

shallow, without the fish of life,’ chipped in
 second in similar vein. ‘Cholesterol
 resides in shellfish and it is a sin
 to eat un-kosher things,’ came from the bill

of first, who tore some more at Jess. ‘The names
 of co-conspirators or we shall pry
 them from your family. Forget the games –
 your friends are dead and you can only try

to save your mother now.’ ‘His father too,
 if only by some miracle – and this
 is difficult to credit – if we knew
 just who the bloody hell his father is,’

second seconded first’s thirst for knowledge
 of sources. Jess responded that his dad
 was everywhere. They placed him on a ledge
 between the floor and ceiling. ‘We are glad

to hear that he’s within our jurisdiction,’
 second shot back, ‘and hereby I arrest
 him too.’ ‘For hiding,’ put in first. No fiction
 seemed possible between these two in quest

of truth. 'Why don't you jump and then we'll see'
'whether you fall or rise' 'or stand stock-still,'
was alternated in duality
by twin brothers-in-arms or -law, so evil

that they could boldly sing in unison:
'He's standing. It's a miracle.' The third
interrogator chuckled at the spin
imparted by these two, still said no word,

remaining in the background murkiness
before emerging with some rubber hose
with which to tap the truth. 'Clean up this mess
and do it now. You are much too verbose.

Silence will bring its own reward.' The two
took up the strips of rubber, end to end,
threatening in glistening shades of black and blue,
attempting to transfer the tones through bend

and point on to the flesh of Jess by flicking
pieces of hose precisely with intent
eliciting the facts. Unearthly clicking
noises filled out the air, without a bend

or buckle in the upright man of pain
and suffering. Jesse underwent the whipping
as silent as a church until the strain
toppled him from the ledge. A new and snipping

sound rose into the air as blood was drawn
at last. 'Don't leave a mark,' exclaimed the third
in abject fury, 'keep it soft as fawn
so that no evidence exists.' Through hurt

and agony Jesse addressed the men
 from off the floor: 'If truth is evidential,
 then facts are bold, even entering the ken
 of mystery.' First said: 'Shut up, keep still

and hold your head.' The third had handed him
 a canvas bag with which to crown the face
 and neck of Jess. Inside the sudden, dim
 new world of darkness with only a trace

of wider oceans as some water trickled
 on to the bag Jess felt fully at sea
 and isolated. First his nerve-ends prickled
 and then the trussing of the bag made free

breathing impossible. He strained to drag
 air down into his lungs. The laughter rang
 far-off through muffling layers of the bag,
 followed by words: 'He's really in the dwang

nogal. Let's talk with him again.' So Jess
 was caught up in a three-way hold of hands
 as first, second and third made up a tress
 constricting breathing further till the glands

of Jesse's neck corded in sympathy
 with their black ministrations. At the last,
 who wasn't in the room as yet, the three
 cut him some slack. The bag holding Jess fast

was lifted with an evil flourish. 'Speak
 or snort some more, you hoary pig,' from first,
 'and tell us who and what you are.' A creak
 in Jesse's neck became a crick as thirst

for liquid twisted him. 'And who's your father?'
was interposed by third. Second then said:
'No, it is how's your father? Would you rather
I showed you?' All that Jesse saw was red

as second crowded him with strangulation
in Dante's dark. The hell had passed when third
adjured the other two: 'Triangulation
will only find the truth inside a turd

or other matter left behind. A live
one needs the care of singularity.
So please can I ask you to let me strive
along with him a while to let me see

what I can do with loving.' Then the two,
second and first, left third and Jess alone,
disappearing somewhere in the flue
of government like smoke. Jesse was bone-

tired as well as -dry like desert sands,
but there. 'Your contacts all are known to me,
but you must earn my trust. Tell me where stands
your mother?' commentated third: 'Is she

supportive of your role as social force
or not?' Jesse was spavined out by thirst,
swelling as if undernourished. The course
of blood was redirected to the curst

limbs twisted in interrogation. 'Mother
remains my source forever. Thus she checks
my course without directing. Could I bother
you, sir, for liquid sustenance?' Vile flecks

in black and blue were pocking Jesse's skin
 and third decided to take pity. Pouring
 a measure he asked if it was a sin
 to be associated with Mag's whoring

even in an administrative way,
 because it remained illegal to pimp
 but not to whore. Jesse did not gainsay
 statement nor implication: 'Please, don't skimp,

but pour me more.' 'I see that sin and law
 do not necessarily always work
 in tandem, not unlike a festering paw
 dogging a beast's running. I shall not shirk

from pouring more Modena. Vinegar
 balsamic is the best and you shall have
 the best, but first, my captivating sir,
 confirm/deny my fears you are a Slav

and/or a communist.' Jesse replied,
 sighing lightly: 'My group's a gathering
 of people striving to be holy, tied
 only to higher things inside a ring

not of this earth. My mother May and Mag
 support us wholly in our quest for light
 beyond another day, look past the drag
 of the diurnal, striving for the bright

eclipse of earth by heavenly things. We don't
 oppose political parties. I'm classed
 as asian other and it is my wont
 to live my life with what I have. I cussed

my circumstances last at age thirteen,
defaced my bursting physiognomy
much like the burgeoning specks of blood the sheen
of outer surfaces right now. Degree

being quite paramount in everything,
I realise that zits and bruises heal
in greater schemes. Because she wears no ring
Maggie is not a prostitute. The weal

of everyone is what concerns her. Please,
give me somewhat to drink.' At this the third
decided it was time to stop the tease
and grant the man his wish. The features blurred

on Jess assuaging primary needs to drink
and live. The third then calmly left the cell
to confront first and second: 'Write in ink
so that from this moment no one can dwell

in doubt as to my feeling that this bloke
is innocent politically.'

Contributors

Aisling Heath has a PhD from Trinity College Dublin. Originally from Ireland, Aisling lives in Fish Hoek with her husband and baby boy, Kian.

Barbara Adair published *In Tangier We Killed the Blue Parrot* (2004), a novel set in Morocco in the 1950s and based, loosely, on the lives of Paul and Jane Bowles. She published *End* (2007), a novel about the artificiality of novel writing, gender roles and postmodernism. It was short-listed for the Commonwealth Regional Book Award for Africa, 2008.

Brett Beiles works as a copywriter in Durban. He also adjudicates festivals for the SA Speech & Drama Association. Brett has been published in anthologies and journals in South Africa and abroad, judged poetry competitions, won prizes, curated and appeared at several festivals. He convened the Live Poets' Society (LiPS) in Durban 2001–7 (founded in 1995).

croc-E-moses is a poet artist musician. He was born an April Fool in sub-arctic Canada and has now lived over half his life in South Africa and Swaziland. He tinkers, coaxes and attempts to incite in sight.

Damian Garside has been published in *New Contrast* since 1977. Since the early 1980s he has had a considerable number of poems published in literary magazines here in South Africa and the United States. He is currently Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at the Mafikeng Campus of North-West University.

Doug Downie was once a biologist, always a writer. After eight years in South Africa he seems to have retired to a veranda life in Sacramento, California, where he lives with the two people he loves the most. You can buy any of his four books of prose at www.lulu.com. Poetry may follow. Stay tuned.

Eleni Philippou was born in Johannesburg and studied English Literature and Political Studies at Wits. She is currently a Literature student at Oxford. Eleni has a keen interest in South African culture, politics and history, which she maintains through reading extensively and travelling widely.

Gail Dendy was first published by Harold Pinter in 1993, with subsequent collections appearing in South Africa, UK and the USA. Her seventh collection is entitled *Closer Than That* (Dye Hard, 2011). Most recently she has been shortlisted for the Thomas Pringle Award 2010, and the EU/Sol Plaatje Poetry Prize 2011.

HA Hodge is a poet and editor. He hosts the *Off-the-Wall* poetry gigs in Kommetjie and Kalk Bay.

Johan Geldenhuys is a semi-retired financial terminologist who divides his time between business dictionaries and poetic fiction. He hopes to marry these in a new genre of gratis verse.

Julia Kramer lives in the eastern Free State and works in the northern Drakensberg. She draws her inspiration from her natural surroundings – the flight of a malachite sunbird, the way a frond unfolds in sunlight. The conservation of the natural habitat is an enduring passion. Julia writes in both Afrikaans and English.

Kerry Hammerton has published poetry in various South African literary journals. Some of her poems were included in the anthology *Difficult to Explain* (Finuala Dowling ed.). *These are the lies I told you*, her debut poetry collection, was published by Modjaji Books in 2010. Kerry currently blogs at www.kerryhammerton.com.

Lara Kirsten is a travelling pianist and poet. As poet, she has performed at the Baxter in Cape Town, the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria, Die Zuid Afrika Huis in Amsterdam, and at the AfrikaBurns Festival at Tankwa Karoo. She forms part of the Eastern Cape poet-group, Ecce, who present readings and publish collectively each year.

Lucretia Pretorius grew up among the woods and waters of eastern Canada, arrived in South Africa in 1968. Singing was her life, teaching her profession. Now she lives near Cape Town, among mountains that drop down to the sea.

Mari Peté lives and works in Durban in the field of e-Learning at the Durban University of Technology. Her poems have appeared in *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, *Botsotso* and *Fidelities*, amongst others. She has published two bilingual collections, *begin* and *Amytis* (Umsinsi Press). Mari is the editor of *Look at me. Women Artists and Poets Advocate Children's Rights* (published by Art for Humanity).

Michael Rolfe tries to make the world a better place.

Oliver Findlay Price is enjoying and enduring the second half of his seventies and spends his time talking with friends, walking in mountains, singing, thinking, writing and reading.

Patricia Schonstein Pinnock is an internationally published novelist and poet. Although Italian, she grew up in Rhodesia and now lives in Cape Town. She has a master's degree in creative writing from the University of Cape Town. www.patriciaschonstein.com

Rachel Paton was born in Port Elizabeth but spent most of her childhood in Somerset West.

Rob Bolton's most recent publication, *Late Quatrains, Exercises and Complaints*, appeared in 2010. He stays in Stellenbosch, where he makes a living in architecture.

Ruben Mowszowski is a Cape Town journalist and writer. His short stories and prose poems have been published in *New Contrast*, *Revue Noire* and *Vrye Weekblad*, in the text/photo collaboration *Karoo Moons*, and in collection as *Souls of Ancient Fish*. His recent novel was shortlisted for the EU Literary Award.

Seven Redform: I am what I always want to be I am. I do not have identity. I hate the words to do with belonging and ownership, obligation and patriotism. I am everywhere. I am part of the earth. Today I am tree. Tomorrow I will be a butterfly. Yesterday I was the wind.

Tendai R Mwanaka has written books of poetry and short stories. He has had a number of poems published in the United States. He started writing poetry and short stories in 1994. He lives in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe.

Tom Byrne was born in New York in 1949. He attended Boston University. His work includes nearly 300 poems, an assortment of short stories, 27 plays and two mystery novels. Living in Cape Town for the past 10 years he is working on a compendium of flash fiction.

Guidelines for contributors

- Submit your contributions to the website <http://www.newcontrast.net/contributions> where the prevailing requirements for each category are published. Please do not send original manuscripts as they cannot be returned by us.
- If you are submitting the same material to another publication at the same time, please say so in your covering email or letter. Inform us if your work is accepted elsewhere before you hear from us.
- Please note it can take up to three months to receive a reply.
- If your work is accepted for publication you will receive one complimentary copy of the issue in which your work appears.

Annual Advertising Rates 2012

Four issues

Published quarterly

Colour (All Issues)

<i>Position</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Single Issue</i>	<i>Annual</i>
Inside Front Cover	A5 – Full Page	R1500	R3000
Inside Back Cover	A5 – Full Page	R1500	R3000
Back Cover	A5 – Full Page	R3000	R6000

Colour (Limited Availability)

<i>Position</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Single Issue</i>	<i>Annual</i>
Inside	A5 – Full Page	R1250	R2500
Inside	A6 – Half Page	R1000	R2000
Inside	A7 – Quarter Page	R750	R1500

Monochrome

<i>Position</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Single Issue</i>	<i>Annual</i>
Inside	A5 – Full Page	R500	R1000
Inside	A6 – Half Page	R400	R800
Inside	A7 – Quarter Page	R300	R600



THE UNKNOWN CHILD
POEMS OF WAR, LOVE AND LONGING

Patricia Schonstein-Pinnock

Patricia Schonstein

'If I have succeeded, through my novels and poetry, in highlighting the futility of war and the need to engender peace, not only amongst ourselves but also towards the earth and all living things, then I would consider that to be my greatest achievement as an author.'

www.patriciaschonstein.com

Skyline • A Time of Angels • The Apothecary's Daughter
A Quilt of Dreams • The Master's Ruse • Banquet at Brabazan
Ouma's Autumn • The Unknown Child



SELECT BOOKS

Established 1986

Founder member of the Southern African Book Dealers Association

232 Long Street, Cape Town, 8001

Telephone: 021 424-6955

Fax: 021 424-0866

selectb@mweb.co.za

www.selectbooks.co.za

We buy and sell scarce and out of print books relating to Southern Africa. We issue regular catalogues containing an interesting selection of books on art & artists, early travel & exploration, botanical books, wild life & hunting, military history, signed & inscribed books, as well as rugby books & programmes

We welcome queries and requests to be placed on our mailing list.



NEW CONTRAST

ISSN 1017-5415



9 771017 541008 >

PROSE & POETRY

