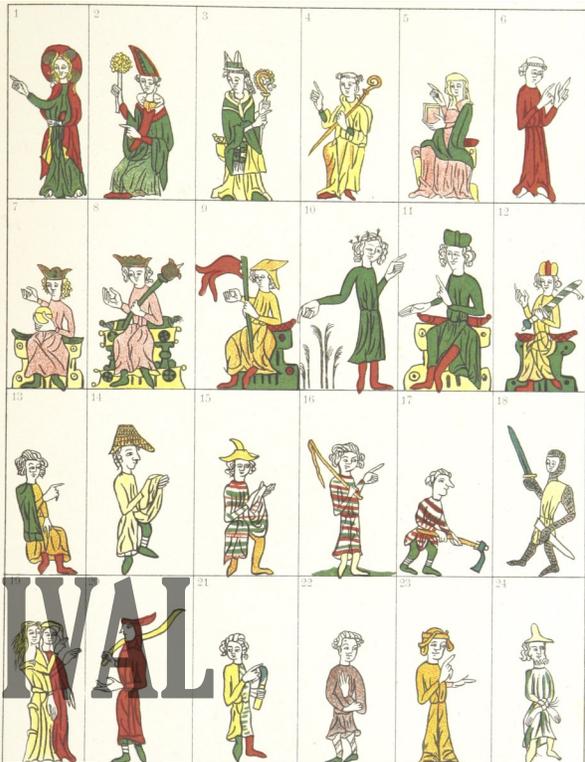
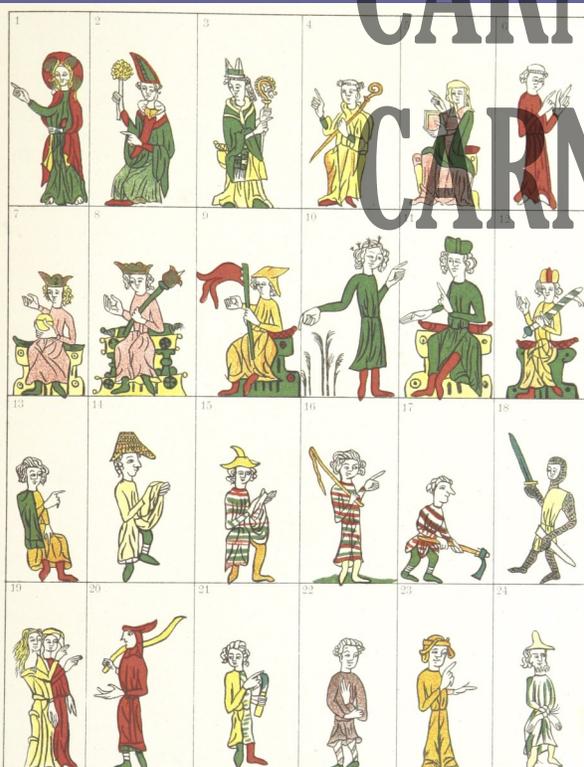


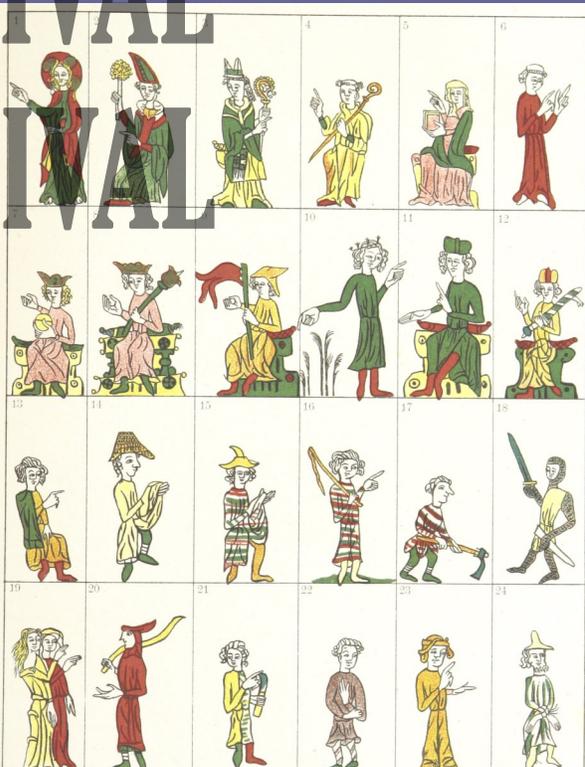
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Shannon Phillips

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CONTENT

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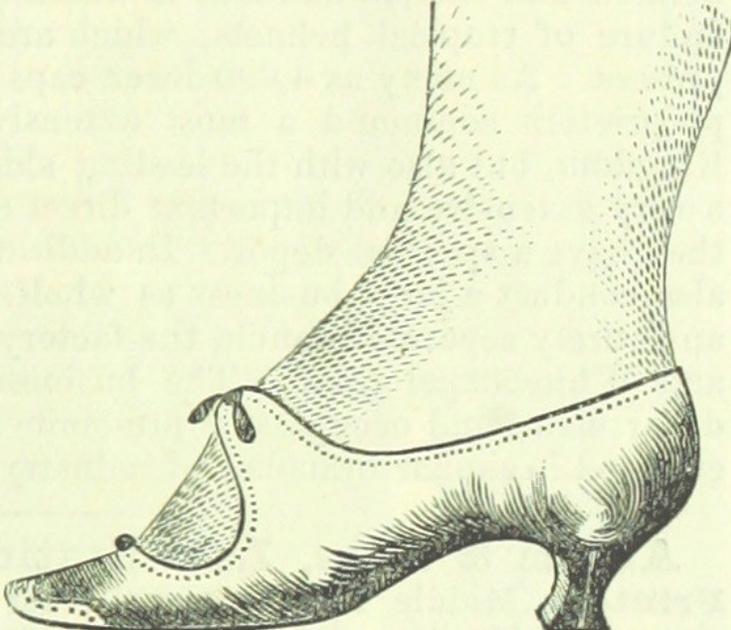
COVER

Das deutsche Volkstum ... Herausgegeben von Dr. H. Meyer. Mit 30 Tafeln ... Neuer Abdruck
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POETRY

- 5 You're Talking
- 6 Dime
- 7 You Walk Within This House Of Light The Way A Poet Would
The River Of Her Favorite Verse
- 8 Mark Twain at the Huntington Beach Pier
- 9 The Kitchen is a Cruel Room
- 10 Lana Del Rey
- 11 Like A Swarm of Crazy Bees
- 12 An Intrusive Thought
- 13 Los Angeles
- 14 Say What!
- 15 El Che Guevara Of The Inland Empire
- 16 Four Thirty-five AM
- 17 once, someone told me to use epigraphs, or epigrams, that they make a poem sound smarter and
give it a setting or feeling from the get go. i told them fuck you and you and you.
- 19 Winter Is Coming On
- 20 an aBys\$
- 21 Dry Cycle
- 22 If you listen, you might hear
- 23 Possess
- 24 It Happens
- 25 And Then We Never Arrive
- 26 Scars
- 27 Man From Trinidad
- 29 Poe
- 30 Second Date
- 32 The Walls of the Arena
- 34 Darlin' You Made Me
- 35 Feeding Time for the Dolphins
- 36 YA Gratitude
- 37 The Honeymoon Is Over
- 38 Phenolphthalein
- 39 untitled

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Abraham's new and successful system.

— *Modern London: the World's Metropolis*,
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You're Talking

I wash the dishes. I separate the mugs I stole from work and the glasses and the bone-china plates that my mother would die if she found out I actually eat off.

You're talking and telling me he's gone for good and that you just know that you nailed the interview and you're just so sure that the job is yours and that things are changing you say: "Babe, things are changing."

I wash the spoons, the forks and the knives. I try to peel dry brown encrusted food off the plates. Two nights ago it was soft, creamy mashed potatoes.

The glass I bought at the little Korean store, the one with little blue and green fish, slips between my fingers and shatters.

"Are you okay?" you ask. You see no blood and keep on talking about what we can do with the money: we can make our lives better. I look down at the sink as you pace behind me.

Knowing that I'll have to pick up the broken glass sooner or later, I start.

The base is still intact, so I put the smaller pieces in it and then in the wastebasket under the sink. You talk about tomorrow you'll work on the lawn. I finish rinsing off the rest of the glasses and you say: "I'm sorry, babe."

I look out the window only to find your reflection walking towards me. I turn around and let you hug me. "Think about how nice things will be," you say. I think about how nice it'd be to cry right now, but I don't. The dishes still need to be put away.

Dime (Pronounced: *Dee –Meh*)

I stab at my fingertips,
bite my thumb,
to not touch your black hair;
move it off your eyebrows
and your eyes that are looking away

from me. My heavy sighs fog the windows
and I write your name on the cold glass.
I want to press the side of my face against it,
cool the brewing.
I catch you looking over at me...

It would be so easy to have sex with you,
enjoy splash of lips, smooth of your palms.
But I'm begging for something else. That
which can pour from you jagged
and fluid, existing in me like thirst and
smelling of fresh Yerba Buena tea.

**You Walk Within This House of Light The Way a Poet Would
The River of Her Favorite Verse**

Your eyes take in the rhyme of windows that embrace the sun,
The sacrament of water glass upon the kitchen counter,
The reclining nude above the sofa waiting for her love's return.

There is music that tracks your quiet steps into the garden,
A voice of singer that you dreamed about the night before:

You listen as he blesses this sorcery of gentle wind,
His guitar the parable whose secret meaning you have already come to understand.

Mark Twain at the Huntington Beach Pier

For Edward Field

In your seersucker suit,
The surfers mistake you for Colonel Sanders,
If not simply for just another aging misfit drawn to this perpetual carnival along the coast,
Brother to the snake charmer,
The parrot-man,
The unicyclist, fire-breather, sword-swallower, painted lady, suntanned Hercules,
And the woman wearing a dress made entirely of ripened fruit,
Her voice daring God to emerge from his barrow beneath the sea
And show his face:

“That way we will know our faith has not been in vain,” she shouts,
While you pull quarters from behind the ears of curious children,
And dream of them on midnight rafts bound for an America you will not live to see.

The Kitchen is a Cruel Room

1

we collected rocks and pebbles
—pretty when wet, fitting our palms
so well they stole body warmth—
we christened them all, above the kitchen sink
with spoonfuls of vinegar.
some stayed inert
others—we liked those better—
expired thick grey bubbles,
an effervescent revelation we witnessed,
curious how our pocket pets would end.

2

in our kitchen—four chairs at the square table
each of us our own knife and engraved spoon—
inside a dark cabinet
in a clear glass jar
lived a mother of vinegar
whom we fed left-over drinking wine.
She hovered
an inch above the bottom,
flat planet like liver, placenta,
when she grew too big
we spooned out a clump
to house her clone in another jar
a placid division
that kept us well-stocked
for whipping up sharp salad dressing
or carving rocks.

Lana Del Rey

Her voice has turned this evening's living room into cabaret,
The moonlight slipping through your opened windows like some cosmic disco ball.
The notes ghost one another as they swirl across your vaulted ceiling as after-hours butterflies,
The secrets that she whispers in your ear are full of melodies you promise not to tell.

You do not hesitate when she asks you to undress.
Your body is the dark river she has discovered running through the electric forest of her songs.

Like A Swarm Of Crazy Bees

she claims she was 'looking for a battery'
among all the shit scattered on my desk
and knocked down a piece of paper
which she promptly unfolded
and discovered some scribbles i jotted
one night after her and i
got into another 12 rounder

i do this all the time
not to put down pretty poetry
but to stop the screaming in my head
the voices talking shit
an entire population of motherfuckers
up there trying to do me in
and the only way i know how to get them
to shut the fuck up
is by writing them out of my system

well, i don't remember what i wrote
but apparently it was some pretty hurtful stuff
and, yes, my head is quiet but my words
are now buzzing around in *her* head
like a swarm of crazy bees stinging
the shit out of her thoughts

An Intrusive Thought

happens when you are alone,
driving your car down the road
in the space between day and night.

Your thoughts churn
and writhe in your brain like a pit
of snakes. One slithers out of the hole and away
from the group.
“I’m an intrusive thought,” he says,
wrapping himself around your neck like a jeweled noose,
“but call me Mr. IT.”

“Wouldn’t it be lovely—”
he flicks his tail towards the upcoming train tracks,
“To take your foot off the breaks and just roll
onto the railway?”

Lights flash, the forked tongue
of Mr. IT tickles your ear, and you bear
down on the breaks as the train rushes
past you in a shaking blur.

It is gone,
but you still feel the shivers
from the train in your body
like the phantom vibrations of the cell phone
you took out of your pocket.

The noose is loosened.
Mr. IT licks his lips, then
slithers back into your ear
for next time.

Los Angeles

Looking along the red worm of tail lights ahead
under a dry sky,
I think, "This would make a good scene in a film,
shot from my position,
while, for instance,
Steely Dan plays in the background.
Well, not Steely Dan. That's insane. That's dated.
Really dated.
Maybe someone like Pharrell.
Though I don't listen to him much myself."

Say What!

I

Say “Have a nice day” you’ll be taken to task
for not saying a great day or one that will last,
whatever you say may be misconstrued
so say precious little, merci beaucoup.

II

To put words in writing is palpably worse
than talking to people and here is the curse,
when you write something down farewell the excuse
you misheard heard what I said, j’accuse! j’accuse!

III

Nonverbal messages shun and negate
they confuse other humans which isn’t so great,
stay stiff as a board when speaking with others
except in the case if those others be lovers.

IV

To downgrade the chances of being misread
die and have people connect with you dead,
but beware this device is subject to fail
for they say in forensics the dead can tell tales.

El Che Guevara OfThe Inland Empire

he was on a Che Guevara kick. but revolutionary literature and speed don't always mix well. next thing you know his pick-up truck is plastered with stickers. Zapata, Villa, El Che, along with a few other infamous rufflers of feathers. PREFIERO MORIR DE PIE QUE VIVIR DE RODILLAS!

he'd been at the same construction company (his brother-in-law's) for 15 years. worked his way up the ranks, hit the ceiling at 25 bucks an hour. had a woman. a house. a couple of cars. ran a crew of 15 illegal immigrants whose heads he started filling with his new-found knowledge.

next, they're up in arms. standing outside his brother-in-law's trailer wielding signs, pick-axes, shovels and pitchforks. "*LOS TRABAJADORES UNIDOS JAMAS SERAN VENCIDOS!!!!*" they chanted, as one. his bro-in-law stepped out and told them, somewhat unceremoniously, "get back to work before i call the migra! there are 50 men loitering the home depot parking lot who would kill to have your jobs at *half* the pay!" he then called El Che Guevara of the Inland Empire into his trailer...

last time i saw him he informed me he'd done a brief stint in a San Berdo rehab and is staying in a sober-living home. got off the speed went back to weed, his first love. and is working in a factory that refurbishes old wooden pallets, breaking them down for 8 bucks an hour, 12 hours a day, 6 days a week. "at first they wanted 18 pallets an hour," he bitched. "i gave 'em 18. then, they wanted 20. i gave 'em 20! then they wanted 25! all day i'm swinging that fuckin' hammer. they even time your restroom visits!"

Four Thirty-five AM

The size of an ant on a heap of hay
is directly proportionate to the size
of a human on a heap of burning tires.

Think about it so much your head begins
to feel like a cracked windshield
in the middle of August in Death Valley.

You're always alone, and always
will be. Ask where you want to be
on a hot humid summer night.

once, someone told me to use epigraphs, or epigrams, that they make a poem sound smarter and give it a setting or feeling from the get go. i told them fuck you and you and you.

“Use epigrams and epigraphs whenever possible” – Jack Grapes

someone once told me to say...
fuck you and you and you.
this is said inside of a zoo that lacks
the proper courtesy to use epigraphs
and epigrams correctly. but all there is to really stare
at is the ass of a zebra and a gorilla that's fifty-two
looks miserable and wants to rip the head off
of her sad, worthless, low life “trainer” before
running amuck in the streets of los angeles.
a city that constantly says fuck you and you an you.
that's beyond the point though, if one uses an epigraph
it should like gumbo have some gumption
to really smack the reader in the face
like a big phony fish from silverlake or better yet
like botox beating your door in to inject your cheeks
at three in the morning on a wednesday
because it's time to party with shitty macro brewed lager.
fuck, of all the words; fuck. for fuck's sake
put a steak on the grill and think of all the losers
lamenting the fall of the berlin wall. perhaps that steak
is as anxious as you and wants to scream fuck
you and you and you for all the shots of hormones
and years of being crammed into a prison cell full
of feces up to the knees. someone once told
me never to use the word fuck as it indicates a lack of diction.
well i decline to acquiesce to waning decay
diction in a place where the biggest single in country
music involves getting drunk on a sunday until the cops come.
fuck you and you and you. lyrics were once a piece of greatness
that stole the souls of the writer and transferred
into musical tones that delight the ears and now fear.
fear of aging fear of epigrams and epigraphs,
what do those words even mean? does the meaning mean

something in a scheme of meaning built on scandals
hello twitter, hello facebook, hello youtube. i know you're following us, me, them.
fuck you and you and you. this is the part where an epigraph comes
into the room slaps someone in the face with a piece
of paper that has an ekphrastic poem written on it in handwriting
with a pen. yes no printer, a hand written poem pissing
its life away by not being on the internet. what was the author thinking?
or was he/she? perhaps they were all vodka drunk and intimidated
by the critiques they received in a workshop that basically told
them to "stop writing, and while you're at it breathing."
then again when was the last time any of us saw an ekphrastic poem
giving writing advice, i mean, really? who needs anybody when the internet
is here, there, in your house, in your car, on a mountain, on a bird.
this is it a femme fatale struts through the door, cigarette pressed between
her lips and the door lightly shutting as quiet as a cat behind
and you two feet propped on the mahogany desk, hat tilted down your brow
and a glass of rye whiskey in hand.

Winter Is Coming On

I walk in. Her gay roommate is parked on the couch. Watching Buffy the Vampire Slayer reruns and puffin' on his vape pipe. "You're wearing a poncho!" he says. "It's actually called a sarape, but yeah – it's cold out there..." "When I told you he's a real Mexican," she chimes in, "I wasn't shittin' ya!" We park it on the opposite couch. Make small talk. Buffy is fighting a vampire. Mano-a-mano. They're going at it in some dark graveyard. Boring. Predictable. Crap. I yawn. Hit my vape pipe. Exhale a voluminous cloud. "You got a haircut," she says. "Yeah." "You look like the Mexican Hitler." "Yeah?" "Yeah." A couple of weeks ago I was Zapata. "Alright," she says to her gay roommate, who's on his smartphone now, cruising the cyber bath houses, "we need to *chat privately*." He winks at her. She takes my hand. Leads me to her bedroom, our old bedroom. I sit on what used to be my side of the bed. Look around. The walls look sad without my art hanging all over them. She steps back out. Checks on her daughter in the next room. "She's out cold." "Good." Our odds of making it woulda been better if we'd lived apart, I think. But it's too late now. And here I am. Over on a Sunday night after the kid's out. For some X sex. If you think letting go is hard, try holding on... What if the kid barges in on us and catches us going at it? We'll have to fuck quietly. The fag in the living room is here to help her make the rent. Good for her. I hope she makes it. I was worried she wouldn't make it. We fuck quietly. Afterwards, we sit in bed puffing on our vape pipes. "You were a terrible boyfriend," she says, "but I loved you well..." "I should go." "OK." I dress. Walk out. Her gay roommate suggests I shave my moustache. Maybe I'll do that, I think. Grow a beard next. Winter is coming on.

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Dry Cycle

The night is warm, and laundromat sticky and you remember
long nights after school drenched in pages of homework on the floor
yelling reverberating off the plaster walls; the little trickle

of drips dropping in the porcelain sink of the kitchen,
neighbors above, below, to the side all clubbing their feet
in a beatless motion that begs, cries for help, for relief.

It never comes. It's only hidden under sweat stiff socks
and sweaty underwear for months at a time before the stains
resurface, darker and darker drastically drowning smiles.

But this is then, not now under a sheet while a fan oscillates forever
the stale whispers of an old ale's demise caught in semi-circle
and the warmth of sleepless lover's breath softly on your neck.

The night is sincere in its brevity giving way for anxious
feet ready for a relentless and unforgiving dawn, and all
you can ponder is the humming humidity of the dryer

that slips into the window, that wrenches a grip on your throat.
This is forever, night, day, spin cycles, dry cycles, all spins
and no thrills until finally it all ends heat ceases to exist; black.

If you listen, you might hear

me say hello to pink sneakers,
goodbye to my root beer eyes, wave
farewell to cracked, bleeding teeth.

Watch me dash down the avenue
breaking my invisible chains,
leaping into the fastest car.

In the cracked rear view mirror,
some old Puppet Master screams
Stop you impossible bitch!

Where is the exit to tomorrow?
Before his words burst into bullets
I will disappear (Don't blink!).

I will floor it! Lose him!
Stretching to the hilltop horizon
I will rise in the eye of the sun.

Possess

Darkness, blanket
the world wrap me
in embrace tight let me
sink into your depth
forever love like I
want love cannot have
my desires realized let
the whole of your being
drown my sorrow come
let me take you into
my mouth go inside
fill me up until
I am you
black and endless.

It Happens

When asked why he drank so much,
the man said that, years ago,
a witch had hidden his heart in a bottle
which one was unclear, and there was no other way to look.
When others lent a hand,
a few were done in by their livers.
When the rest saw he could not weep,
they drank until their lack could fill him.

And Then We Never Arrive

You saw the armband when her robe slid down,
and you ran through the complex, in thick
underwater air and glowinggray halls.

Guards playing croquet in the yard, grilling flavorless,
tender shreds. Others believe you're a guest. You smile
and say anything,

Then your feet whip uselessly in the air over the highway,
moving forward by inches. Sleepy children peer up from the bushes.
"It looks like him."

Lab-coated troopers smash bony street girls
under steel-tipped boots; radio voices echo
your reported coordinates.

Roadblocks grow higher like instant weeds,
your feet barely clear them, as bullets nick upward
like angry pins.

You hurtle toward clay-red Mexican hills and
cardboard homes, as the gentle couple on a
distant grassy plain

are briefly entertained by the faraway figure, a
screaming ape-shadow from yesterday's
broken experiment.

Scars

I would tell you about my battle wounds
If you had fought for me

Man From Trinidad

An easter egg dispenser stands
next to ceramic horses
singing faint, melancholy tunes
for anyone willing to pay
a dime to hear.

Woman buys
Dented cans of Vienna sausage
stickers of rainbows resting
on clouds
Pastel butter mints wrapped in paper
Errands before a round of cards.

Three men sit outside
near a sign that tells

“beer and batteries can’t be returned.”
Talk about women they thought they loved,
sips of alcohol from vineyards they only dreamed of
St. Michel’s name butchered
the neighbor who was allergic to basil,
grey tape used to patch holes of screens,

sunken leaves in stagnant pools of Fall.
Drink coffee from 7/11,
a cup for 99 cents
since it’s a dreary day,
and on dreary days everyone drinks coffee.

“I know men from all over,”
one, about sixty, proclaims
voice humid
and heavy with
an Islander accent.

“I even know a man from Trinidad.”

The others, with olive pits for eyes
whisper unanimously
“Really, Trinidad?”

Toussaint, a man of 55
who works the ticket booth
on South Water Street,
prepares for his night shift
gathering his shirt
with his name embroidered in script,
contoured by a pallid orange.

“Just wait until you retire,” another man encourages him.

“Then every day feels like Sunday.”

Previously published in *The Sacred Cow Magazine*.

Poe

Memories of destiny
Blindfolded in a labyrinth
Approaching the visible
Effects of the unfathomable

Everybody's falling in love
With the wrong person
At the wrong time
On the wrong side of the tracks

Year of the Locust
Millennium of the Holocaust
Misshapen moon on the wane
Far afar that day long ago

Aside put aside all the ways
There are to mess up your mind
Singing down a wishing-well
Out-of-tune carousel

A new color word
Not in the dictionary
That comedy team—
Must be dead by now

Twin towers of iron zig-zag path
Guardians jangle keys
On giant key-rings
Twin jackals laugh

Second Date

she sat on
the bar stool
nodded to
the bartender

the beer mug
slid to her
open palm

a red line
drifted down
the wet glass

she sucked
her palm
unconsciously

a slight smile
crossed her lips
as she tasted
the sweet blood

she scanned
the bar, her eyes
fell on him—
a wolf on the prowl

as he closed the
door to his Ferrari
she slid her finger
down the blade
strapped to her leg

now exposed in
the slit of her
slinky black dress

shivering in
pleasure from
the pain

The Walls of The Arena

The gates open from the pit,
two soldiers, clad in red and gold,
spew me into the blinding sunlight
while a crowd shakes in my wake,
the ominous roar of a thousand empires
bestowed upon my meager being,
their cries ravage my footsteps forward.

Gladius held in hand, I stare
at the figure before me, whose eyes
are not fixated on me, whose arms
reach toward the surrounding crowd
clasped outwardly about as he spins
in circular rhythm across the sand,
and screams in echoes of sought glory.

The trumpets bellow; the match begins,
the stranger clad in sheep's clothing laughs,
I lunge forward, he dodges gracefully,
I swing from the right, wide, he parries—
I fall forward, face-first. He laughs,
the laugh of a man slaughtering fodder,
the crowd following in a gleeful chant:

“Perficiam! Perficiam!” Finish him.
Turning to my back, I crawl away,
sword grasped tight, his features change,
a sudden void of listlessness, only rage
and the slight odour of permeating desire
to strike his foe and fight for continued life—
he lunges forward with a Leopard's leap:

“Nam claritas Roma!” The crowd cheers
as his blade-point reaches my neck;
he holds steady waiting for the killing command.
Urine leaks from my bowels, mixing
with the worn-down blood which stains the sand,

stretching the wet space below my waist
as the walls of the arena threaten to close in.

The crowd's cheers stagnate mute amongst
the bitter-taste of air—all feeling becomes
fleeting, all senses strain under the flow
of everlasting blood—only the eyes,
preposterous, wishing to spare the world
of final misery, spot a statued-eagle
perched upon a tower's precipice far away.

Darlin' You Made Me

and now I'm fit
as a butcher's dog,
neat as a bachelor's
bed, urgent as a bitch
in heat, useless as
a mockingbird. You
made me handy
as a pea-shooter in
church, useful as a
knife in a virgin's
shoe, weary as a rocking
horse in a house
full of triplets. Love I'm
lucky as a spider in an
ant farm, pretty as
springtime toad, skinny
as a nun on roller skates,
fat as an Easter lamb.
Please don't leave me
foolish as a tom turkey
fanning his tail in
the middle of the road;
darling, let me be
the rainbow in your
prism, let me be
the bedtime story
your mother and mine
both told.

Feeding Time for the Dolphins

They supplicate in plashing arcs and bows,
as he clanks down the bucket and flips out dead fish
on schedule.
The unconcerned face of God.

YA Gratitude

I am young and walking down a street filled with palm trees
yesterday I kissed someone (who was young plus beautiful)
the air is that nice temperature you can't feel
everything looks pretty clear and bright
nothing in my body hurts chronically

The Honeymoon Is Over

the honeymoon is over, friends,
our true nature coming to the surface
i mean the way we *really* feel
our eccentricities and nasty habits

twice she's barged into the room
and caught me jacking off
and it's not that she minds when i do it,
she says, but that i don't ask *her*
to do it for me or at least let her watch...

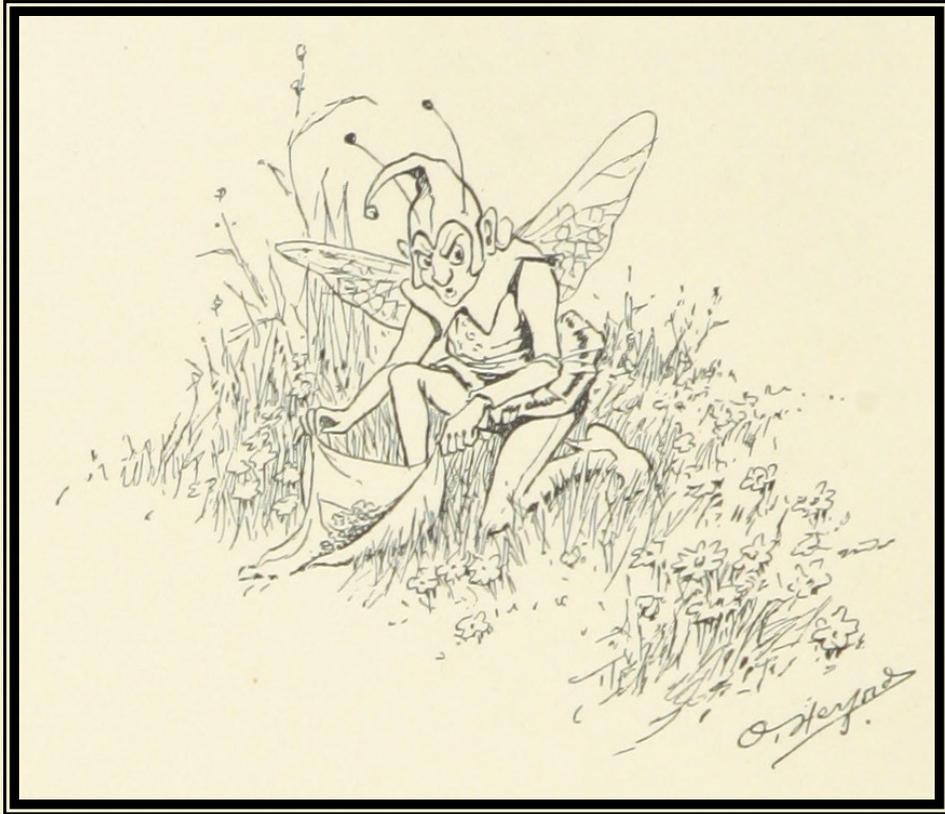
she likes to walk around the house
in my butthuggers, wears the same
raggedy ass lace-up winos all the time,
talks to the alley cats and her plants,
farts on my leg when we sleep...

Phenolphthalein

Phenolphthalein and the way you looked
Overcame me
When we cooked
Whatever we cooked on our Bunsen Burners
As the smell of sulfuric acid enveloped us
I developed a severe crush on you
And my senses sensed
You were more than just a lab partner in Chemistry
Those sacred scents were a mystery that
Just made sense
To me
That you should be
Where those awful smells were
Till one day it occurred to me
When you were ill
And were not here
And another lab partner took your place
The toxic smells all disappeared!
What could it be? What could it be?
Imodium, quite possibly
That kept the air around her sulfur-free
Phenolphthalein!
Phenolphthalein!
Is odorless
But by your side
Alas!
It resembles hydrogen sulfide
So I will remember you by
Not what's acidic or what's base
Just your gas
I don't remember your face
I'll recall
I gave you the shoe
Because the smell of the chemistry lab
Wasn't the chemistry lab at all
It was the smell of
Phenolphthalein...and you

untitled

I read on instagram that Tom Ford gets up at 4 every morning:
To work
And sip an iced espresso in a hot bath,
Through a bendy straw,
Because he doesn't like warm drinks at all.



— *Artful Antics*, Herford
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