

Michael Aro

somenwords.com

alphabet

The entire living room was standing around. Nobody was talking. The antique leather armchair cleared its throat a little, trying to catch the attention of the beautiful mission style Tiffany floor lamp turned and facing the open window in full three-quarter view. It was hopeless. She was in love with a tree. No one could understand it.

Mother Durga suddenly shouted from the next room, Hello? Sappho? Are you in there? If not, where?

pastoral

everything calculated

space licentious cleridae
exigent carapace morning cardinal

vociferous exegesis

guise of levee ariel
pi dipody polyglot rubellite

relicted interior
assist abated heme

non-standard analysis

antennae and abdomen
tenuate acephalous excogotate beak

Stenotaphrum secundatum flowering culms ascending

ingeminate echo entropy

address

Titled, "Interpreting Geopolitics as Poetry,
With a Focus on Metaphor, Metonymy and Identity,"
The International Association of Socio-biological,
Cognitive and Quantum-mechanical Linguists
Or IASCQL (pronounced `ass-quill) listens
Attentively to the keynote speaker's opening remarks:

Asoka stands on the battlefield at Kalinga,
Attended by his armies of subatomic particles and genes --
Surveys the annihilation of his enemies and says, following Plato,
"Only the dead have seen the end of war"
And also, anticipating Wallace Stevens, and I quote,
"I have not but I am and as I am, I am."

While waiting on the rest of society to show up,
We should take a moment to realize we have added not one mote
To what we know as regards our essential nature,
Whether or not we even have one.
The question we must now ask ourselves is this,
Does this constitute a crisis of identity, or not?

In response, I propose a simple experiment.
Everyone, please repeat after me -- All is atman.
No, not -- All is language. All is atman. at-man. a-t-m-a-n. atman . . .
Although I must admit, given this little bombed nom com psalm,
The two may not be so different
After 2,000 years of OM . . .

random

010000011010110
011001011111100
111010000100101
100111101001110
101110100101110
001110100100010
000100100011000
000001010110010
111100101001010
101010101100010
010110000111000
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010111000001000
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101000110000000

civilization

1.

I have always believed, he says, that a civilization is best understood by the nature of its language. Language is the root artifact.

2.

In the beginning, after several late night conversations, invariably, the subject of sex comes up. He says, Many women think men are just in it for the sex. Maybe. But I'm not one of them. She says, That is so lame. He says, I care too much to lie about a thing like that. I won't take it back. She smiles and says, That's better, but not much. They are lying side by side while they talk. They don't sleep together that night. He tells himself it's a matter of principal, but in fact he has made up his mind too late.

3.

He is at the dinner table staring at his asparagus. He has been watching the news all afternoon, while she has been reading. He looks up and says, You know, even though capitalism is to democracy what sex is to love, capitalism seems to have come out on top. It's ridden the coattails of democracy to fame and fortune. She puts her fork down and looks at him. It's obvious he has been silently rehearsing this speech over dinner. I realize now, he says, that capitalism is patriarchal in nature. That's why it finds itself so deeply entwined with the Abrahamic religions. They're all competing for the same space using the same methods -- objectification, forced penetration, dominance and control. Democracy is supposed to create free markets for both consumers and producers, but capitalism doesn't seem to mind if there's only one producer to every million or so consumers. Capitalism no longer depends on democracy for its existence, if it ever did. Capitalism has sold its soul to corporatism and corporatism is a gangster. Money is kicking the shit out of democracy in broad daylight and everybody is just standing around watching. So what? she asks. Even if all that's true, it makes even less sense to spend all your time thinking about it. Don't watch the news if it upsets you. It's not real anyway. It's your life. You can do whatever you like. You're right, he replies, picking up his fork.

4.

She writes her sister, I have acquired a tattoo that stretches across the small of

6

my back. I wasn't drunk and it wasn't for love. I saw Gustav Klimt's *Tree of Life* and had to have it. Some of the most gifted artists in the world are tattoo artists. I know that now. All day today, I've been browsing through frame catalogs from online interior design studios, art supply stores and picture frame companies. I've torn out the pages and circled those pictures that I like best. I've decided to photograph it, frame it and put it on the wall. I can't decide between one of several Florentine Baroque styles or a simple, modern, thin black Bauhaus motif.

5.

His mother told him, Love does not come and go. If you ever stop loving a person, you never did. He thinks she was probably talking about his father and not necessarily in relationship to sex. Even so, he finds it a useful reference. It's a difficult thing to admit to the person you love that you have loved (and continue to love) others with a similar passion. It can be very unsettling to everyone involved. This is especially true if the other person is young, or recently divorced, or if the shoe is on the other foot. The Greeks understood this better than anyone as evidenced by their plays and poetry. Even today, people tend to think that you can't possibly know what true love is if you've known it more than once. They suspect that you are not a true lover at all but, at the least, a fetishist, a collector of hearts, livers or other body parts, and at worst, an apostate. They assume that everyone shares the same fundamental belief where true love is concerned, that true love is a one-time-only thing, a *No Pass-Outs* sign on the bar doors of Utopia. Once you enter, you can't leave. If you ever do leave, don't come back if you're not prepared to pay.

6.

He's browsing the Web. He's looking at the news. War is imminent. War is always imminent. It appears that our allies are selling weapons to our enemies and that we are selling weapons to our enemies. It appears that every person's electronic transactions are now visible to anyone with an inside connection and that, once you give your name, those transactions can be used to instantly designate you as being either for or against. It appears that most of the products in the world are going to be made in China, most of the software in the world is going to be made in India, and most of the money in the world is going to be made in the U.S. He sees an interesting link and follows it to a page titled, *Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Ur*. He reads the page as if it were the daily paper. He looks at the pictures until he begins to feel that he is living in the City of Ur. Ur of Abraham. Ur of Sin, the moon-god. Ur, home to king Ur-Nammu, who wrote the first rule of law into history, who made the Ziggurat.

7.

Sometimes, if they sit quietly for long enough, almost every animal in the neighborhood will stop by the birdfeeder to eat, drink or socialize. That includes the squirrel. They've noticed that the birds aren't afraid of the squirrel. But the birds and the squirrel are all afraid of a neighborhood cat so old it couldn't catch them if it wanted to. And that's only part of the picture. In the evening the sun doesn't set so much as the dark rises up through the trees until at last the light rests gently like a halo on the highest branches. At about the same time, whatever clouds there are sink slowly into a darkness that doubles as a mirror. But even this darkness is not the end of things. Nothing is ever the end of things.

metonymy

Great king Melodric looks long upon the army assailing the gates of his citadel before turning to his own fair daughter standing at his side.

O my Daughter! Where is a steadfast unfailing heart great enough to lead us from this dark place, to ride out with hope honor and glory into a bright new dawn?

Where is my nunubian star, my munificent mundus?

Where is that panorama of well-dressed men with bowler hats and umbrellas floating in a still blue sky?

Where is a cloud to cut across the moon like a knife through a terrified wide-open eye or butter?

Where are the shadows dressed like motorcycle cops stepping through the mirrored doors of Hades?

Where is the red sphinx lying quietly in the midst of butterflies and painted fireworks?

Where are the beautiful long silk stockinged legs extending like stamens from the heart of a giant rhododendron?

Where are the dreamless nights filled with stone monuments growing from the eyelids of lovers?

Where is the little girl rolling a hoop into the melancholy sunset of an ancient city?

Where are the early days of spring peopled with unnamable objects advancing in rows toward some distant vanishing point?

Where are the dreams of wild beasts lulled by a piper under a red sun in a white sky?

Where is that most coveted cache of gems -- white, blue, red and green, lying like drowned men in pools of their own blood and vomit?

Where is the silent one looking down from the watchtower as dusk settles on the chimneys of a town glowing red with fire?

Where is the staircase reaching down into the mantle of the world whose steps are made from the tongues and beaks of hummingbirds?

Where are all those eyes ears noses and throats so carefully seasoned and thrown into the stockpot of time?

Where are the huntsmen with their candy bows and arrows, their ice cream daggers drawn in ire?

Where are the bed linens carefully folded and tucked away under elephants in winter?

Where is the multitude of little red boots standing patiently in line for tickets to the big wazoo?

Where are the public baths filled with honey in which candelabras bob for prizes?

Where are the suburbs we so earnestly longed for with their satellite dishes and well-tempered shrubbery?

Where are the paper soles of our tongues, cleaving to the roof of heaven, dry with an imaginary thirst?

Where is one angry poet (you know the one I mean) yelling at a gorilla?

Where? Where?

Do not be troubled, Father, said the daughter.

Here is a steadfast unfailing heart great enough to lead us from this dark place, to ride out with hope honor and glory into a bright new dawn.

Here is your nunubian star, your munificent mundus.

Here is a panorama of well-dressed men with bowler hats and umbrellas floating in a still blue sky.

Here is a cloud to cut across the moon like a knife through a terrified wide-open eye or butter.

Here are shadows dressed like motorcycle cops stepping through the mirrored doors of Hades.

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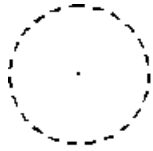
Here is one angry poet (I know the one you mean) yelling at a gorilla.

Here. Right here.

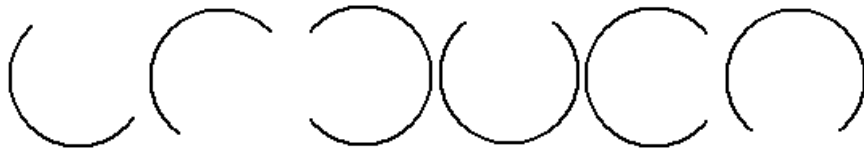
clock



A.M.



P.M.



12.59 P.M.

portrait

I have it on the highest authority:
"This is a portrait of Iris Clert if I say so."
No matter what it is.
A limerick, a sonnet, a sestina.
Free verse, found text, typography.
Graphs, cartoons, maps.
Junk mail, coupons, magazines.
Billboards, TV commercials, Web pages.
Contracts, patents, lawsuits.
Financial reports, stock quotes, tax returns.
Food containers, product labels, bar codes.
Pens, pencils, crayons, markers.
Eating, drinking, sleeping, working.
Using the bathroom for any purpose.
Driving, bowling, waiting in line.
Kissing, touching, fucking.
Being born. Dying. Lying in a coma.
Shooting a gun. Dodging bullets.
Caring. Not caring.
Making lists.
Stop making lists.

gravity

Monday mornings are hurried. They pass each other several times entering and leaving the bathroom, dress side by side in separate full-length mirrors and gather up the novels and monographs surrounding the bed before they make their way to the dining room, separating only long enough for him to take out the garbage and her to place fruit, cereal, coffee and milk on the table.

He wants coffee for breakfast and to read the paper. She prefers cereal and conversation.

She tilts the milk carton over her cereal and the milk flows out and up until it covers the dining room ceiling in a smooth glass pond of milk that quickly evaporates into milk clouds hovering inches above her head and in which she easily recognizes faces she has and has not seen.

She talks to him though the paper. Here's a question for you. If it's true that objectivity is a myth, how is it that I can see faces in the clouds? Is the construction of nature one thing, the construction of social reality another?

Everyone knows the gravity of milk is a social construction, he says. If we did not agree that milk flows upward, then it might not. It might flow to the left like water, or to the right like blood.

Perhaps, she says, taking a piece of granola between her thumb and forefinger and examining it momentarily before popping it into her mouth. But gravity is a different kind of truth, don't you think?

It's impossible to discover truth, he says. There is no correspondence between words and words, much less words and things. Let's have dinner out and talk more about it. I have to hurry or I'll be late. He walks over to her, puts his hand gently on her shoulder and bends over to kiss her. I love you, he says. I love you, too, she says. He floats slowly upward, passes effortlessly through the window and flies away.

She reaches across the table, picks up the paper and, rolling it into a cone, gathers into it all the blossoming milk flowers that are falling from the ceiling.

accident

In the third grade I had an accident. I was sitting in something like a cathedral alcove at the top of the monkey bars, watching another little boy swing back and forth. He had never done anything to me. I had never seen him before. Perhaps he was an angel. If so, that may explain why, without cause, I suddenly grabbed the bars and lunged at him as he swung by, hoping to knock him to the ground. I lost my grip and fell like a sock monkey, like a shiny little ball in a pachinko machine. Until that moment, with the exception of a few childhood sexual perturbations, I had considered myself saint material.

The first thing I remember is the bright noon sun, accompanied by the distant sound of many voices, shining through a prism of broken glass near my face. Two nuns dragged me out by my feet, packed me into a car and drove around according to my instructions, until they realized I was in shock and had no idea where I was or where we were going. They returned to the school to use the phone while I sat patiently in the car, trying not to bleed on the upholstery. When we eventually arrived at my house, they stood me in the middle of the living room and stripped me down to my underwear while nearby stood my parents, aunts and uncles, having all left work for their love of me, staring wide-eyed with fear and concern at my bruised and bloody body.

We finally went to the hospital where my arm was put in a cast, my ankles were bandaged, my lower lip was stitched and my parents got to see an x-ray of my skull. I spent the night under observation at my aunt's house in my older cousin's bedroom where I slept next to his laboratory rats. It was there that I achieved Enlightenment, my life filled with a bodhisattva's empathy, not so much for the rats as for the boy.

palimpsest

For each unordered class of symbols S
there exists a class S_1 whose members
are ordered classes of those symbols.

For example:

where S equals A,B,C

S_1 equals $\{(A,B,C), (A,C,B), (B,A,C), (B,C,A), (C,A,B), (C,B,A)\}$.

Where S equals $0,1$

S_1 equals $\{(0,1), (1,0)\}$.

All S_1 are equivalent across all S .

For each member of S_1

there exists a class W (called Omega)

of N length symbol strings

where N equals $\{1, 2, 3, \dots\}$.

This class is a poem,

the Omega poem,

for that member of S_1 .

The Omega poems in binary form

are $\{0, 1, 00, 01, 10, 11, 000, \dots\}$ and

$\{1, 0, 11, 10, 01, 00, 111, \dots\}$.

Each of these poems

contains all digital images,

all digital sounds,

all digital texts.

interview

Is the end state of language the unending effort to create meaning through the continuous beading together of symbol strings, or a Zen garden in which we stand and rake or sit and meditate?

Wittgenstein: I don't know.

Basho: Me neither.

profundo

after the untimely death
of the enchilada

beneath the terza rima party barge

under flatulence
of seated moorings sounding

into and through attendant calcitrant

surfaces slick with oily mutterance

beside
next to
between
across
and on

whatever languorously invisibly hopeful

waits like a traveler from a far country

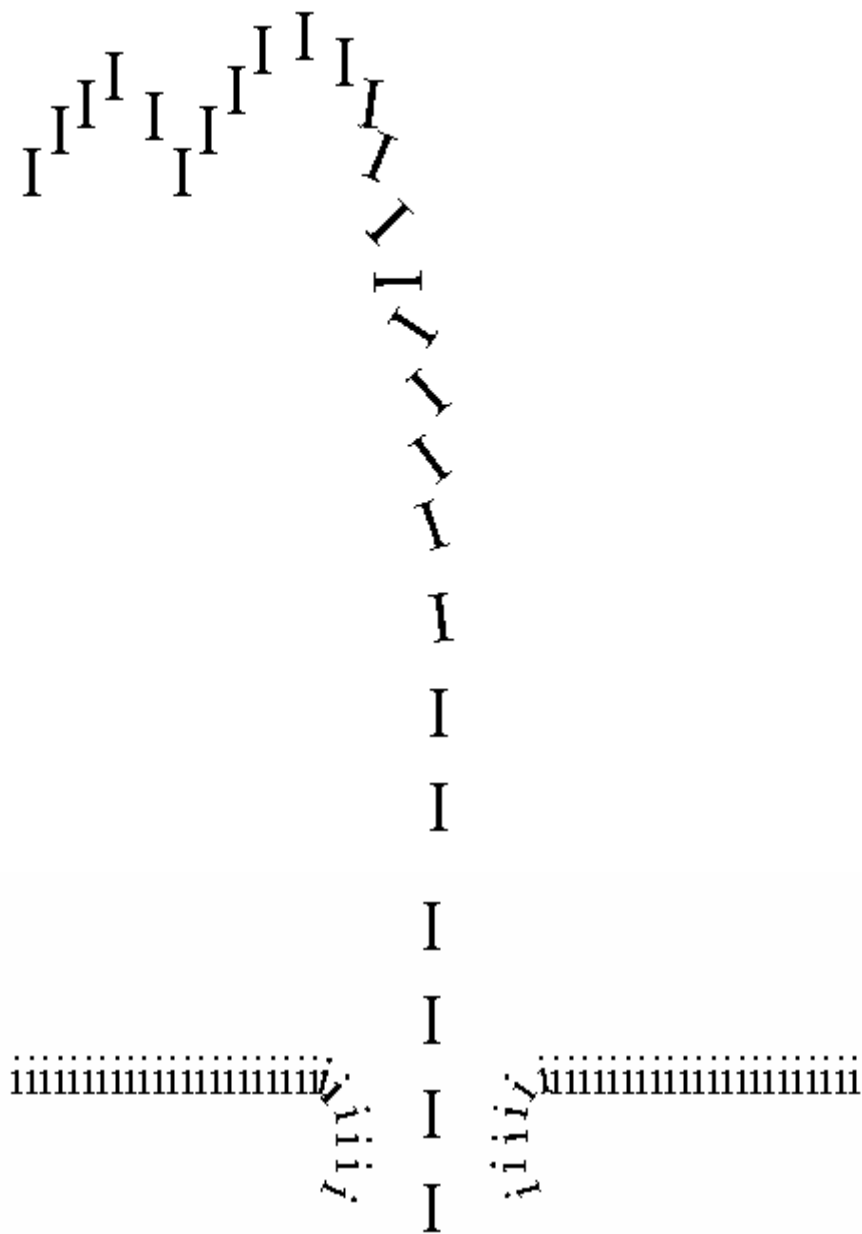
before the past against which soundness

meaningful or not

comes and goes

a tapestry throughout

identity



pataphysics

Nasrudin was sitting in the corner bar, nursing a beer. A friend came to the table and asked, Can I buy you another beer? No thanks, said Nasrudin, I don't drink.

fashion

Literary news flashes in the year 2050:

Flash! – Microsoft's grid computer *Alphabetamania* defeats incumbent champion Lao Cruz to win this year's Nobel Prize for literature.

Flash! – The World Court rules that media giant Zizaki cannot legally use a computer program to generate all known combinations of all known symbols in all known languages in order to claim copyright protection on everything not yet written.

Flash! – Conceptual artist John Smith from Portland, Oregon has successfully encoded the full text of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* in a DNA limited edition issue of the species *Triticum aestivum* to be distributed by Midwest Farm, Lawn, Garden and Tractor.

Flash! – An archeological team sponsored by The Literary Trusts Corporation has located another cache of unpublished original works by Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe, Rumi, and Li Bai.

ziggurat

zerozeroze-
rozerozeroz
erozerozero
zerozerozer

oneoneone
oneoneone
oneoneone
oneoneone

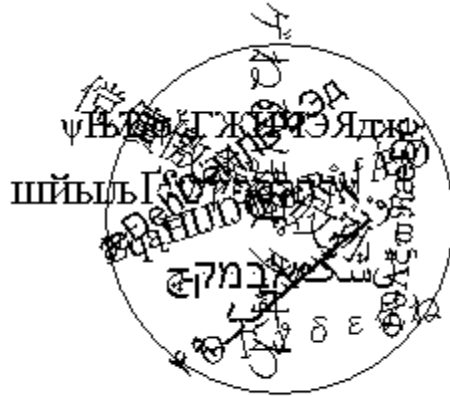
zerozeroze-	zerozeroze-
rozerozeroz	rozerozeroz
erozerozero	erozerozero
zerozerozer	zerozerozer

zerozeroze-	oneoneone
rozerozeroz	oneoneone
erozerozero	oneoneone
zerozerozer	oneoneone

oneoneone	zerozeroze-
oneoneone	rozerozeroz
oneoneone	erozerozero
oneoneone	zerozerozer

oneoneone	oneoneone
oneoneone	oneoneone
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oneoneone	oneoneone

zerozeroze-	zerozeroze-	zerozeroze-
rozerozeroz	rozerozeroz	rozerozeroz
erozerozero	erozerozero	erozerozero
zerozerozer	zerozerozer	zerozerozer



criticism

At some point all art becomes conceptual,
its medium a function of the institutional
contexts in which it manifests, the novelty or newness
of an individual work less dependent on the
mean, median or mode of its production
than on the quality and degree of its deviation
from the canon that precedes it and from which it derives
its principal references. The value of the conceptual
component of a work of art
is based less on novelties of logic
than on the qualities of its ideas,
qualities which may not be expressible in a formal
language. It is at this point that criticism,
more than an act of interpretation, becomes an art form
in and of itself, an intellectual performance
of the artifact, the artifact in turn
a randomly accessed point from which the critical
argument can be taken in any direction.

sonnet

Aquila Target Viacom Intel
Boeing Ford Motor DuPont de Nemours
Delphi Wells Fargo Bell South Honeywell
Exxon Mobil ConAgra Wal-Mart Stores

Philip Morris Reliant Energy
Home Depot Merrill Lynch Met Life Mirant
United Parcel Service Dynegy
AT&T McKesson Sears Roebuck

Phillips Petroleum Lowe's Fannie Mae
Alcoa SuperValu El Paso
UnitedHealth Group Berkshire Hathaway
Wachovia Walt Disney Conoco

Dow Chemical Safeway MetLife Enron
Georgia-Pacific Boeing Verizon