

ANNUAL REPORT

2023

POETRY

EDITOR

JON LEON
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Ponza

A white sea mist arrives most evenings, ominous, soft—
the sun vanishes in it like a palmed coin,
but by morning it's forgotten, as if dreamed
by light dot-dashing between the binary slants
of masts and umbrellas, *luce e ombra*
on bare stone beaches, their pirate coves
and grated tunnels overlooking paddle-pool lagoons
for sad, youthful-past-their-years international couples,
cursorily childless, and familial trash from Rome.

An undertow of criminality—our host, Francisco,
fifty and quietly frightening, sports a tagged anklet
with his bermudas, finally going straight with boat trips,
short lets and restaurant recommendations.
His friendly endorsements have an extortionist's carry.

The island's single road takes in the *chiesa nuova*
with its smart clock tower and mechanic chimes,
shadowy hotels, apparently empty, and a trio of shops—
peaches hard as apples, lemon sodas, sweet yellow plums.
There's a yellow villa with a private beach
where *il duce* was imprisoned for about a week.
Cigarettes are cheap as water, almost as essential.

Was the tour guide's twisted vocab—*ludic pastimes*,
bubonic invaders—cribbed from Nabokov?
A saintly candle is tattooed on his bicep, amid other arcana.
He points out faces of rock that resemble witches,
mushrooms, seahorses, practically anything.

The sun lounge *ragazzi*, tanned past toffee,
have a handful of English to fling around

or flourish like a flickknife. Every hour or so,
an aging beach bum, latterday smuggler or mutineer

with wiry waist-length dreadlocks
pilots out to sea with a Greek adolescent.
He stands at the helm, motionless,
a figurehead from a bygone future,
seeking a further Atlantis, some other Babylon.

Star Cloud Green Paper Confetti

If you had a star
I want to ask you
Where you'd put it
And do you think I deserve anything special?

I told you that I wish for you to dream of a cloud raining out paper confetti
And of wind
It's easy to tell you
But too soon
I just thought you should have a good dream

And green is not my favorite color
It's just nice
And you are not my favorite anything either
So don't get all gusty

*Robert
Fernandez*

Orpheus

a
bunch
of
candles
melt
wildly
over
a
seawall

girls
in
red
bikinis
screaming
at
a
severed
head

Kirby Olson

The Karner Blues

I've been to the Munson-Proctor in Utica,
to see the Warhol "Big Electric Chair."

It is a midnight blue,
the satin sheen and darker hue.

Color is an idea, and blue
has many shades and tints.

In the lupine blue of the Pine Bush Preserve at Albany,
the nearly extinct Karner Blue,
flies like a Warhol in its dwindling environment.

Kalliopi Mathios

Living between the lines
Being inside the lines
Water running through pipes
I believe in your fire
Green gives us
A sense of being
Further away

Supercarrier

The USS *China* is the biggest ship in the world, wider across than the second-biggest ship is long. There's no war anywhere in the world anymore, and I'm in heaven. We're going up to the flight deck to watch a demolition derby. They're driving the new tanks into each other and trying to flip them over. They've got bleachers set up and guys and girls are making out underneath them. They're cooking hotdogs over oil drum fires and drinking beer we got in Shangri-La. The silhouette of the ship's tower above us looks like that mountain in Wyoming that used to be a tree stump. Later when I go home, I ride free on the ship's subway system, I walk five minutes to my compartment, and I fall asleep with MTV on.

H.D.

The Pool

Are you alive?

I touch you.

You quiver like a sea-fish.

I cover you with my net.

What are you—banded one?

Xanadu

Made sexless by the millennium's microplastics
We dumpster-dove the southeast,
Yearning for imagined *nauticalia*—
A big fucking boat
We could run around on,
A big wet ancient stone
In the middle of a field,
A big pile of whale meat
On a spit at the village fête.

We emerged from the short 90s
Into the long adolescence
Of the unfixable now—
The gallerist's dilemma
The crisis of consultancy,
A white-hot burn on your back
Caused by badly positioned
Pizza Express Neon

Now we dip grisly fingers
Into noncompliant hummus
Tell ourselves we know a guy
Who knows a guy in a skyscraper
We sluice through the outer boroughs
Glaring at the awful buses
Glowering at chumps
With pushchairs

Ecstasy Is Now

Ecstasy is now or never at all.
It has no life elsewhere, no being apart
From this pale transience, this shadow-play.

Its food is the secret
Trumpeted by the spring blossoming, and again it is
The silence in the gaze of the flower
Keeping the secret forever.

Ecstasy is to wake in the night
Lurking at the core of the brightest noon
And to embrace the dark hollowness as a friend.

It is the snow-islands
In the deep lake of a March sky, and it is also
The islands of delight lifting their fragile peaks
Through the obscurity of the mind.

Morphine

Coming out of it
I remember a smell she said
a smell like a honey dome.
A summer running inside of itself
tiny drops of water
and honeysuckles.
The earth arched its back
and bent with the roads
of Lancaster County.
The smallest cat from your childhood
stretched at the gates of a farmhouse.
The past turns into the pasture
and death becomes a silo
something big
obscure
and white.

Vicente Gerbasi
trans. Guillermo
Parra

Nevada en el trópico

Lentas como copos de nieve
caen las flores
rosadas de los apamates
en las avenidas
de la ciudad vespertina.
En un parque cercano
juegan los niños,
cuando Caracas
es un infinito bosque de cigarras.
Pronto llegarán las lluvias
y volarán las aves
a refugiarse en los espejos
del tiempo.
Hemos estado en la nostalgia
de una lejana nevada.

Vicente Gerbasi, *Los oriundos del Paraíso* (1994)

Vicente Gerbasi
trans. Guillermo
Parra

Snowfall in the Tropics

Slow like snowflakes
fall the pink
flowers of the *apamate* trees
on the avenues
of the dusk city.
In a nearby park
kids are playing,
when Caracas
is an infinite forest of cicadas.
Soon the rains will come
and the birds will fly
to seek refuge in the mirrors
of time.
We have been in the nostalgia
of a distant snowfall.

Vicente Gerbasi, *The Natives of Paradise* (1994)

Reflections Through an Austere Grace

Let the modal chords glide. Glide through austere calculations. To make all thoughts empty. To be there when it ends. When the sensibility shattered. Then there was nothing. There was nothing left when it ended. To be embraced. To live with a sense of longing. There was never any life. To drink only shadows. Only shadows now. Glancing at the wilderness. There were shaded images in the field.

There were airs to unfold. To reflectively bend that weight. In the imaginal realm when it could be happening. But there was never any poetry. Spheres had degraded. Forms were molded by the air. Were there any words in the ether. Or was it just a maze of foam. There was a cushion of sound. The sound was doubled and retraced through itself in a slightly out of tune fashion.

The surface of the earth. The shape of words. Swords fell from the sky. Acidic air. Can life go on. Sipping on Bigallet China-China. Sweet orange, bitter orange, various herbs and spices. A sense of the supernatural. When there was something paranormal happening. When it was without reason. Shadows dancing on the staircase. Sounds bouncing off the wall. Orange plasma floating in the sky. Three silvery white triangles glistening in a clear blue sky. The collation of smokeless flame.

Could it be that there was never any magic. Could it be that the spirit of the earth had turned against us. And now there is only darkness, degradation. Walking by Lake Erie in the early morning. There were no gargoyles by the lake, only peaceable nature. To be a part of a kingdom. A kingdom that is not of this world.

The accumulation of images and experience. To glide through echoes. Shadow regions of the liminal. Zero point energy. Blessings and sacraments. The complete works of Castaneda. How he fell into a trap of his own making. But it was the energy fields he uncovered. The carbonation of water. A cruciferous vegetable. Dead Can Dance. Into more imaginal

forms. Frantic movements. The onslaught of information. A fine tawny porto. Images on a message board. Circular interpolation. Frozen beef liver.

When the ether is reconsidered. The formation of an aura. A tonic for the nerves. When life was a blur. The relics of saints. When honor had a sense of brutality. Martyrs and prophecies. Can the collective wake up. Or was the psyop too powerful. It is up to us to guide things. Oversized skeletons of giants found in burial mounds. The ancient texts have a deeper meaning. A decorative Ukrainian axe made of wood. When it was a diminutive sense of grace. But there was always an echo. But it made sense to be a pianist. And to be a machinist. Ireland, Russia, Czechoslovakia. These are the sounds of echoes. Echoes through eternity, as learned through Dante. A variety of frozen fish. The mineralized flesh of the fish. To consume minerals. Only minerals.

To resume the echo. Through various rotations. Blood. What was not real. A wave-istic echo. But could there be an accumulation. An accumulation of energy. Running a 5k. Running another 5k. Writing bullshit poetry. Dark jazz piano. A reflective sensibility. And to be degraded by the ugliness of the world. In spherical tones. Modulated auras. To glide into images. A shoegaze guitar band. There was a tremolo effect. But it didn't make sense. To be that detached. To have nothing. Instead of any echoes. But there was always grace. And to feel the ethereal blood move around. Could the weight continue. But there was always accumulation. The sensibility. But were the hyenas ferocious enough to stop it. To love life, and to love the vitality of life. There was always that feeling. And that was something that never degraded. That was how the echo accumulated. When there was nothing but vitality. But it was too intimate to divine the echo. What could be accumulated, besides apathy. Sequential Circuits Six-Trak. It was reading through *Operators and Things* by Barbara O'Brien when everything shattered. To juggle frequencies which previously didn't exist. Blesseds, venerables and saints. When a fragile sensibility could simply exist, without the weight of hyena bullshit. Because it was always poetry. As a way to escape, or make things more real. When there is nothing but life. And still there is more life.

But there is always another life, an eternal life. Could the freakiness prevail here. But it was a darkwave aesthetic that accumulated. Chronic apathy. And that was how it came into being. Because there wasn't any life. A vitalized sense of purpose. Life was always the vitality. To be aware of a sense of corruption. The redemption of our weakest dreams. Through sacramental ether. Accumulated grace. Divine echoes. But was it always an accumulation. It was a coldwave darkness that provided the orientation. When language had degraded to a certain point. When nothing was being considered. But it was always grace they were after. A sense of divine grace. They could never have it. When it was the only thing. The degradation of virtue. That was never happening. Through eternal grace. When it was always divination. In a real accordance. It could be nothing. But there was always grace.

Contributors

Sam Riviere's *Conflicted Copy* will be published in 2024.

Vera writes in New York City.

Robert Fernandez is a poet, translator, and visual artist. He recently translated José Asunción Silva and Benjamín Puche poems, which appear in the Spanish on new Colombian banknotes, for the central Bank of Colombia.

Kirby Olson lives in the Catskills Mountains where he has been a professor at SUNY Delhi for over twenty years. His most recent volume of poetry is *Christmas at Rockefeller Center* (WordTech, 2015).

Kalliopi Mathios is a poet and librarian based in New York.

Gabriel Friend is a writer based in Montreal, Canada.

H. D. (1886-1961) is a celebrated Modernist poet. "The Pool" is from *The Pamphlet Poets: H.D.* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1926). Rights: Public Domain.

Ned Powley

Winifred Rawlins (1907-1997) is a celebrated Quaker poet. The enclosed poem is excerpted from *Before No High Altars* (Exposition Press, 1955). It is included here for critical, research, and educational use.

Taryn Andrews is a writer, and a gardener, and a mother living in Pennsylvania. She is the author of *Clouds Can Trees* (Minutes Books) with works appearing in *Pom Pom*, *Witch Craft*, and *Maggy* among others.

Vicente Gerbasi (Venezuela, 1913-1992) was a poet, editor, journalist, and diplomat who was a member of the 1930s literary group *Viernes* in Caracas. This poem is from his final collection published in 1994. Original publication credit: Vicente Gerbasi, *The Portable Gerbasi: Selected Early and Late Poems of Vicente Gerbasi*, selected and translated by Guillermo Parra (New York: Black Square Editions, 2022). Reprinted here with permission of the Fundación Cultural Vicente Gerbasi.

Born in Cambridge, MA, **Guillermo Parra** is a poet & translator who lives in Clearwater, Florida.

Chris Moran is an outsider ambient musician from Lakewood, Ohio. He has recorded music under the names Boring Dream and Cixarlow.

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