

*Trust is a door. Go through.*

**Deny nothing. Affirm everything.**

The following pages are derived from various projects published by Scriptor Press. This is the first in a series of sampler books intended to extend the range of places and increase the variety of hands that work published by Scriptor Press may reach.

Scriptor Press is part of an exciting grassroots effort across the land to get art by the people into the hands of the people. No matter what you might hear, Art is alive & well in this world, & holds as always much of the hope many people have for the future.

However this book comes into your hands, it is our hope that it will prove a worthy travelling companion for you.

Blessed be.



Ray Soulard, Jr.  
Editor & Publisher  
Scriptor Press

# Scriptor PRESS

sampler 1999 no. 1

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MALDEN, MASSACHUSETTS



SCRIPTOR PRESS

1999

Poetry by Ray Soulard, Jr.

1

## The Millennial Artist's Survival Guide

There is a secret joy amongst these  
times, a within's within, a known  
and speckled spectral thing, an exploding  
blare & swoop from between our dreams,  
a series of coded midnight shadows,  
glyphs taut with our best laughter, all cosmos,  
we are all cosmos, without & within.  
We are all cosmos. We are all careening.  
We need to begin now, trade into ecstasy,  
we are beginning now. Always beginning now.

\*\*\*

Begin now. Tell the truth. How fear  
so often drops the artist in flight!  
Begin now. Tell the truth. There is  
more to this cool night than a spasm  
chased, a spasm caught; uncapped and  
hard, caught and had. Tell the truth,  
begin now, our lives are thin and  
dry yet still we're ready to rise,  
our best thoughts scattered angels ready  
to collect & make new godds, new Art.

\*\*\*

But how to rise? how to make? thin and  
dry, the ground tracked with dull diamonds,  
yesterdays, the air full of dead dawns,  
dreams, godds beyond the next galaxy  
slowing noone's tears. Learn to steer.  
Gods buried in pointed buildings  
& fading volumes diminish noone's fears.  
Days the undirected ships & dreams  
revelations of continuous crashings.  
Shut off the lights. Smile. Undress. Crash again.

\*\*\*

Morning again. Secret joys amongst these times. Within's within: is your Art necessary? Study today secretly, from a distance a thousand miles up or a thousand miles far. What are you to the lesser gestures of breeze? What is your Art to that hillside coven of oaks or that grove of ravens? Bury your pen. Become a fountain of blank sheets. Empty. Evaluate.

\*\*\*

Another day, pinkcheeked & whispering, laughter inside fat rays of light, all is sunlight today, do you follow? (Secret joy. Within's within.) Follow your sun. Today it's all yours. When does today begin? Can it possibly end? Follow your sun. It's always been there. Become a blank sheet covered in fountains. Blow ever higher. Trust. (We are all cosmos. We are careening.)

\*\*\*

OK. Tell of secret joys. Sing of within's within. More drums, more dancers, more bonfires. We're all masters of knowing now. We all can fly. A kiss. A tab. A cold and sweet blue dusk. The how is irrelevant. Practice undifferentiation. Watch us name molecules. Watch us paint with supernovas. Recognize  $Godd = Art = I = Art = Godd = I$ . Time will stop. Time will go. Just watch.

\*\*\*

A kiss. A tab. A cold and sweet blue dusk. A full moon. Handfuls of stars. Roused spirits. A long, sky-tending tree, leafless, several scattered through the autumn wind. Ready? No? Go! Go into the flow. It's past midnight now. Time for seeking vampires & scribbling zombies. A whole town of them. Go. Go into the flow. Two kisses. Two tabs. Longlegged blue dusk, cold and sweet, draped over midnight. Brick buildings full of gunshots. Welcome to ZombieTown.

\*\*\*

Let's not stay, for here we can only do this, not that, preach apologies for the night, its vampires & scribbling zombies, but really, are we doing all we can? Listen to me. I'm in giggling pieces by now. Are you doing all you can? Listen to me. I preach to occasional dogs & flayed mathematicians. Listen to me. Are you doing all you can? The wind is rising higher. Don't you want to ride it anymore?

\*\*\*

Who are you? Are you the eyes of the world? I mean: Who are you? Ready? No? Who are you? There's little left here but lights & purple fruit. I'll help you by leaving. I'll teach you how to evanesce. I'll recount my greatest times of laughter, the nights when I danced & died. But I'll leave in one way or another. I am time itself. I exist until you no longer need me.

\*\*\*



Something's about to happen. A net  
 cast into black waters is caught &  
 dragged down. Something's about to happen.  
 a jagged formation of jets passes  
 over a rousing herd of buffalo.  
 Something's about to happen. Beyond  
 the book's talkings & the blinking  
 boxes of diminutive noise. Something's  
 about to happen. The anxious buzzing's  
 passing from our dreams to our limbs.

\*\*\*

Secret joy. Within's within. Spectral  
 illuminations available everywhere.  
 Beware. Be aware. Lunch-counters.  
 Swinging dives. Graveyards where  
 vampires meet & breed. Where zombies  
 chuckle & scribble. Beware &  
 be aware. Your flood isn't receding,  
 is it? You're not diminishing.  
 The anxious buzzing is your music,  
 song beyond songs, beyond words & notes.

\*\*\*

Become a virgin. Again. Reinvent &  
 reinvent & reinvent. I am you  
 & you are me & we are the world  
 beyond eyes. Secret joy. Sniff the air.  
 Within's within. See your heart.  
 A kiss. A tab. There is no blue dusk.  
 Become a virgin. Again. We've got to  
 huddle closer together. We've got to  
 remember how. The secret joy is today's  
 open hands. The secret joy is always beginning NOW.



Ray Soulard, Jr.  
 November 8, 1998  
 Malden, MA.

11/30/98  
 "work"

Dear Ray,

As usual, my writing to you on a more frequent basis is limited by time. I do not mean the physical aspect of sitting down with pen in hand, but rather the preparation of gathering one's thoughts in order to express them accurately. Art is one of those transcendent topics that require full concentration and fluidity of thought. I will first respond to your letter directly and then make a summation of how I feel about art.

Of course art is not for the keeping or more vulnerable than its maker. We can never make enough art or "permeate"<sup>1</sup> enough of our lives with it. Art transcends the physical plane-- of course it has no "cap or floor."<sup>2</sup> However, art may not be "for the selling,"<sup>3</sup> but taken to the extreme art seems to be available to the general population in only one other way-- after the artist's death. How many times have we had to wait to appreciate the artist? Why cannot the artist be recognized while he/she is alive? Does art, and I mean art which transcends rational Western thought, scare society to the point where it cannot be dealt with for fear of retribution by fellow critics and the noteworthy elite? I think this is the case. I believe, Ray, that art should be for the selling if people will stop listening to the critics and listen to their own hearts. Forgive this bit of sociological interpretation, but it is necessary for my next point. Art is something that takes people above and beyond their everyday worlds-- how we have been trained to act in our culture from birth. Art is contrary to our established culture and must therefore be passed (from a relative grading scale) or panned by the self-proclaimed art critics before the buyers decide if they feel comfortable with the material. I agree that art, in an idealistic society free of social conventions, could be equated with the cosmic force or "Godd=I=You=Godd=Art. . . etc." Creation from our inner selves, that has largely if not completely been determined by what has transpired in our lives (vis a vis cultural and social influences), amazes me that it occurs it at all. It is further astounding that the artist's

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Soulard to Burke, 10/30/98, p. 38

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



creation can surpass our own supposed limitations of reality. Remember, I still hold to my premise that "we are what we were." But this is further evidence that art can transcend our reality. Perhaps this is why the societies of many cultures would rather not deal with the artist's perspective. I have heard it said that there is a fine line between genius and psychosis; probably because both are not readily understood.

There is much merit to support your belief that the universe has its origins in the eternal note. Eastern mysticism is full of references to the sound of vibrations that can be heard through a state of meditation (and/or with psychedelic substances). Pete Townshend wrote: "There once was a note, pure and easy, playing so free like a breath rippling by. The note is eternal. I hear it. It sees me. Forever we blend and forever we die." When people have the so-called "ringing in the ears," they are often labelled psychotic. . . just food for thought.

Your quote from Merton<sup>4</sup> is especially intriguing since this was what my last letter to you was, in essence, about<sup>5</sup>. Existence is so profoundly pure that attempts to describe and sometimes fruitless. But one way, as you state so exquisitely, is to "give some away."<sup>6</sup> As an artist, I have only recently begun to appreciate my own ability to create and explore various themes. I would enjoy sharing my music through selling, live concerts, or free demos. I believe that the greatest contribution an artist can make to our culture is to share his/her beliefs/art while alive.

As I stated in the beginning of this letter, time is my own obstacle and a constant nemesis. Since time is unconquerable and only relatively measurable, I will leave time to its own existence and inevitable paradoxes.

I feel about art. Emotion is the essence of art. How does one feel about social conditions? I play the guitar, sing, and occasionally write to be on the outside of it all. I am outraged by the absolute waste of what mankind could be. The potential wasted is what sickens me the most-- mankind has seemingly unlimited potential at its disposal. Yet this

<sup>4</sup> "We are at all times in the first day of creation," 1965 (included on invitation to 11/21/98 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting) -- Editor's Note

<sup>5</sup> *Cenacle* 30, October 1998, p. 45-46

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Soulard to Burke, 10/30/98, p. 44

potential is constantly being wasted. When I perform my own material or someone else's (cover songs), the words take me beyond and the music creates "the sound" of the of the here and now reality. I know that my purpose is to exist and make contact. It is unclear as to what level of being I will attain before I "die," but doing art enables me to transcend the physical level. Sometimes I've noticed that people feel uncomfortable with art, whether it is music, painting, poetry, architecture, sculpting, or free expression. Not all people, just some. They do not want the truth. The truth implies an absolute degree of finality. Much of our culture is like this. People are sometimes repulsed by the truth, by art, like opposite polarity.

Certainly some "art" is inferior-- when it is done under a pretense-- just for making money. I cannot legitimize "rap," "hip-hop," "alternative music" as art. Yet they are accepted by much of the mainstream population. These forms of entertainment are exactly that, entertainment, but not art. Townshend goes on to write: "Goodbye, goodbye Sister Disco. Now I go. I go where the music fits my soul." This is what separates entertainment from Art. Art contains the truth which is all God inside ourselves (the cosmic force). Entertainment is without reference to a state of being. I believe that art is integrated into our souls-- our cosmic level, whereas entertainment is disposed of by the mind because it contains no permanent reality.

The Greeks knew intuitively that art and truth were not subject to the physical laws but absolutely immutable. They recognized that certain mathematical laws were absolute and consistent. Through their philosophy, the Greeks realized that everything that was not art was superfluous. If present-day mankind could make that distinction, perhaps through philosophy alone, potential would be realized and art would be all.

Handwritten symbols and signature. It includes a circle with a cross inside, a plus sign, a heart, and a stylized signature that appears to be 'JTB'.

10 Titles for the Living

1. God in the corner  
shitting on theory
2. The formless  
laughing at those  
who would impute form
3. The songbird  
supporting the reed
4. A vote for the sky  
and its blueness unsaid
5. Bliss, you stony bird
6. I'm dancing already,  
I'm dancing
7. The clear shells  
of pain
8. Introducing Lao Tzu  
on electric guitar
9. Little pink mirror  
nailed to the west
10. Sex, the final unguent

The Belly of the Beast

Awesome and darkly romantic  
when a huge freighter  
slides into the sound  
affixed by tugs  
port and starboard  
like a lamprey on its host. . .  
Deck stacked four-high  
with containers of hunting vests,  
AA batteries, shampoo, desk lamps. . .  
No crew ever visible  
a ghost ship  
driven by a bank of computers  
in downtown Jakarta. . .  
And yet the sheer immensity  
and ominous grace,  
the burnt-orange hull  
furrowing ivory ribbons  
of sleek propulsion  
while roiling wake  
flattens and joins  
the unaroused breadth  
of placid water. . .  
But there's oil and sweat in the air,  
on the deck,  
beneath the surface. . .  
Earth and people  
drilled, violated, sucked dry. . .



And I've worked  
 unloading these containers,  
 hauled down broken boxes  
 hours on end--  
 and then the shiny back-wall of the can,  
 a momentary sigh  
 of accomplishment and release  
 until the next seal is clipped,  
 heavy iron doors swung open,  
 and the heart and muscles  
 spill out on the dock  
 like grain from a bag. . .  
 Still, against my body's knowledge,  
 I gaze dearly at these freighters,  
 dismiss the atrocities they hold--  
 (for me-- arms too heavy  
 to lift a thought  
 for others-- 12-year-old girls  
 toiling 18 hours a day  
 7 days a week). . .  
 I resonate to the stately outlines  
 of big ships, in motion or anchored--  
 pray that such beauty  
 will find its own level. . .

Not That, But This

(for Mark)

God is not a blade of doubt  
 that hacks and slashes flesh and mind  
 but the breath and blood of gathering  
 enamored of each little shout. . .  
 God is not the slip and glide  
 from sleep to work to sleep again  
 but the spellbound ship  
 of shine and release  
 rushing on rails of open water. . .  
 God is not dishrag sour and sodden  
 but Terpsichore taut and radiant  
 replaying the dream of existence  
 from graveyard to rooftop. . .  
 God is not the horizon  
 dark with smoke of burning lots  
 but map of mapless love  
 crisscrossed with paths  
 of drunken prophets. . .  
 God is not the address  
 at which you received mail  
 but the wavelength at which  
 you embody change. . .  
 God is not the sulphur and salt  
 you have wrapped and bound  
 to early wounds  
 but the lasting gouge  
 of sex and language  
 uprooting the pain  
 we sow so deeply. . .

God is not whimper or sneer,  
 projection, tear or payment  
 but full-bore nightsky  
 bursting all night  
 within its meshed lattice  
 of darkness and light. . .  
 God is not tavern or clinic,  
 snakepit or mansion  
 but door of dimensionless bliss  
 swinging on silent hinges  
 for all its wayward tenants. . .  
 God is not this, not that,  
 say the wise and weary Hindus,  
 God is not that, but this,  
 say the wild and winsome boys--  
 a rare and holy chance  
 to evaporate fully  
 like a songbird  
 into time. . .



## Golden Gate Sketchbook

Barbara Brannon

*Notebooks are the artists' cages  
 White the sheets and black the pens  
 Truth is captured on the pages  
 Prisoner of the camera's lens*



*New:old::angles:curves*

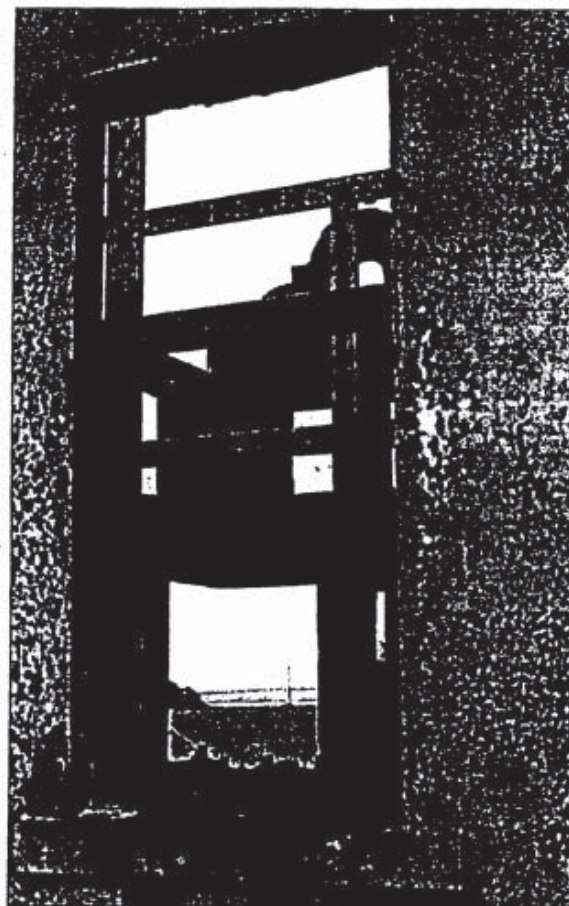
*When the pane is lifted,  
the window opens right  
onto the day.  
Lean out far as you will,  
it still goes nowhere: it's  
not a doorway.*







*Windows & bars: Haight St.*



*Windows & bars: Alcatraz 2*



Separation

the bronzed  
barebacked  
threshers

go to the granary

to perform

violent  
acts  
of salvation

\*mls\*

...  
(To Ray, May 27)  
Sausalito is shrouded in one huge charcoal-  
colored cloud; the Golden Gate is crayoned  
in dull orange onto a mottled rice-paper  
sky.... They say you can hear the clanging  
of the cable-car bell on the mainland,  
and it is the closeness of such tangible  
signs of freedom that drove prisoners so  
tantalizingly to insanity...

Winter's Workhouse - A Prose Poem

Where propitiation is offered to the deity of a late snow, where  
 forsythia are plucked bare by blank air and the haze of a coming  
 week is not intimated even a bit, the little god smiles, knowing his  
 price has been determined by the ageless winters past, who  
 died, but have left their mortuaries across the landscape where  
 ashen veiled women weep over their husbands buried beneath  
 the fragile snows they once plowed, combining white and brown  
 clay in a stew unpalatable to all but those who were given stones  
 by their fathers long ago, and were bidden to eat and did,  
 fracturing their teeth on the granite, leaving dirty pearls behind,  
 for a sacrifice to the newly deceased god of winter, whose ashes  
 float in the Charles.

\*m1s\*

Regions of the Earth

tonight  
 I am intent  
 on phantasmal reality

but a dull ache  
 is a reminder  
 that I have yet  
 to sweep  
 through the dust

the mystic heart  
 is a dirty place  
 indeed

\*m1s\*



Intended One

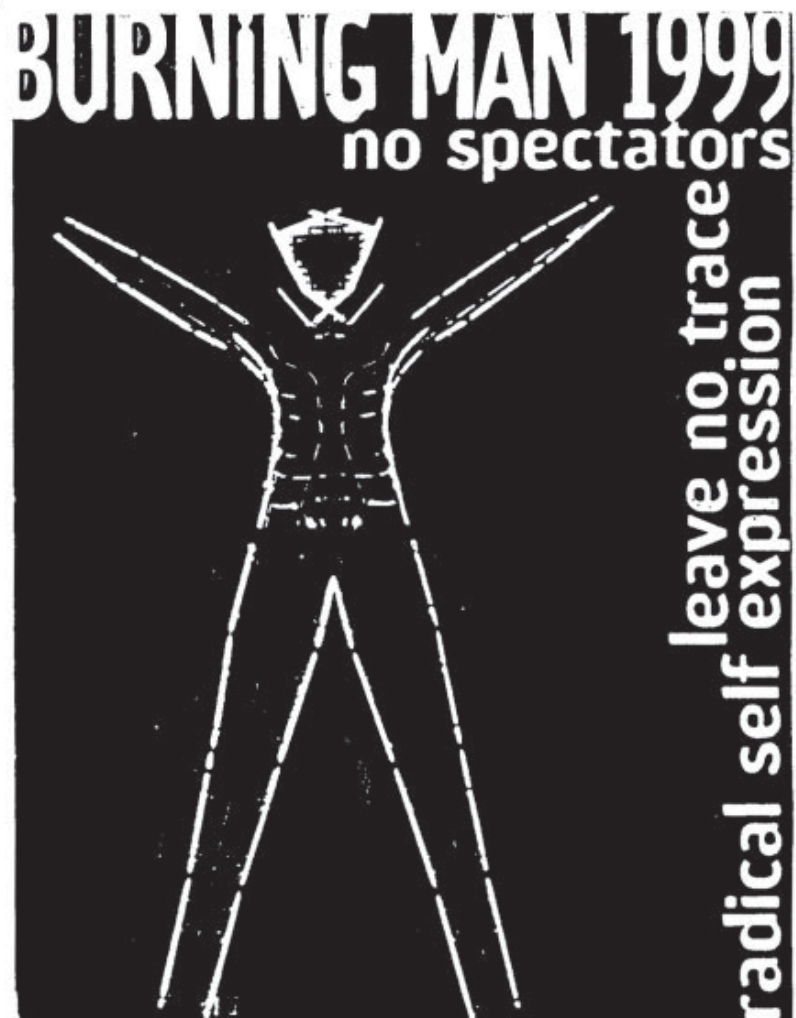
I am  
intent  
on Allah  
and the  
world  
which proceeds  
from Him

intent  
sometimes  
on lingering  
transience

intent  
on another  
hour's  
sleep

intent  
on music  
and a bowl  
of silver

\*mls\*



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Along Rimbaud

He had already gone beyond the place where rhymes lead,  
 created poems like homes with no foundations,  
 and keeping to the road in summer,  
 he finds Brussels with its cobbled streets and attic strewn  
 with foul pipes and bags of hash;  
 and on the floor Verlaine's notebooks,  
 open and laughable. And that wretch,  
 gone for a bottle of wine? Good riddance!

He'd just as soon drink through summer alone;  
 in enormous gulps, whole systems of religion,  
 poison after poison, until his insides, a banner of burning colors,  
 burned through his eyes into which the visions would return  
 to form newer languages, derive entire dictionaries,  
 turn words into visions into words into  
 an old man at twenty-one, sitting like Abraham  
 on a stiff-backed chair twitching and looking down  
 on the cobbled streets of Brussels,  
 wondering where that wretch had gone; Ah Verlaine!  
 who will never know what it is to have been deprived of youth,  
 with sick siblings, watching the Germans smother the countryside,  
 and a mother, like a fallen number,  
 long dead yet still waking and pacing the hay in the barn at Roche,  
 unfit now for dreaming with no man nor shoulder to lean against,  
 recalling symphonies told in sighs—  
 tunes exhumed from other dead endless seasons.

But the ribbons are still on the walls,  
 and the framed pictures of Arthur,  
 even after all this; themes and vocabulary tests  
 bound in leather cases and his voice  
 still echoing among the walls I must go Mother  
 I must go and close to her bosom  
 the torn scrap left from a sheaf of illuminations  
 telling of a young couple strolling through an orchard  
 as king and queen;  
 How did he come to hunger for such knowledge?  
 And that wretch, his friend,  
 Verlaine, come again to take him away,  
 and where exactly can one go to look for youth  
 but further into heaven  
 or perhaps on the road and in winter, Africa,  
 but for now simply Brussels with its cobbled streets  
 (long before London with Verlaine jealous again—  
 angry, pathetic, his wife threatening from beyond the road's beginning  
 and nearing madness when he'd draw a pistol and  
 fire it at Arthur— hurt but undead,  
 left to watch his friend go to jail,  
 nonetheless coming to understand the vast essence of dying,  
 and then, of course, the depositions and letters and slave ships . . .)  
 and endless music laid out like long strips of ecstasy  
 along which they'd walk together night after night,  
 senses deranged to the hilt,  
 and in the mornings, never quite rearranged into more than a mere  
 pulsing wreck of nerves,  
 with synapses like snapping live wires  
 charged with drugs with sex  
 while Arthur's poetry began to wither up inside  
 and though the visions were still flowing  
 the words began to expire. All the dictionaries  
 became shouts and curses, and like a foul-mouthed grubber  
 he'd sniff through mountains of trash looking for something larger,  
 as beautiful as the flowers at Roche,  
 blooming in anonymity.



Ah Verlaine, that wretch, Where is he? with his  
 fragile little hands that would tremble  
 as they touch Arthur's cheek, and eyes  
 that would well up and water like crippled daughters  
 when they meet Arthur's (so full of venom, and he  
 just a boy, with the face of a baby!)  
 skulking down the boulevards after  
 a night at the theater with the shouts of Nigger!  
 and Fuck! only to be beaten by the authorities and dragged out,  
 discarded like phony money along sewers rank with wine  
 and urine of soldiers and prostitutes.

Arthur sits alone in another stale room  
 under a heap of blankets, seeing below the cobbled streets of Brussels,  
 watching the intermittent walkers  
 and breathing in the smell of bread wafting on the warm breeze,  
 he looks up at last and there they are; hidden among the clouds—  
 horsecars riding swift down the highways of the sky  
 and a faint smile comes across his lips  
 realizing that though the pen is dying the worlds will go on,  
 stretching like morning over the tops of mountains rising like cities  
 (or cities rising like mountains), breathed out like wind  
 by other children deprived of youth and left to flower  
 into similar madness, blistering on communes, on  
 untracked plains; haunting letters sent from old friends;  
 in the wishes of pedantic school boys with wet sheets—  
 or on drunken boats, the words will go on;  
 and here he is now, that wretch Verlaine, coming out of the sand  
 in the cobbled streets of Brussels with not even a bottle of wine  
 but instead an insipid frown and in one hand a herring;  
 Ah you asshole Verlaine. You asshole.  
 and in the other hand a bottle of oil; Ah you asshole.  
 louder now You asshole. so that Verlaine could clearly hear,  
 You Asshole! until he stops to look up and Arthur says:

Don't you look like an asshole with your bottle of oil in one hand  
 and your herring in the other.

Verlaine looks back saying nothing  
 but mumbling below his breath: he's mad. He's mad. He's mad:  
 trying to convince himself he knows nothing about this boy  
 with darting eyes and mischievous grin, dressed in tatters, sitting in a  
 window  
 as though a phantom reflecting his own younger days—  
 cozy and devoid of even the thought of hiding in summer under blankets  
 built for colder seasons like his friend, the sick prophet . . .

So who can hope to know what lies below those words, You Asshole!  
 perhaps what deliriums, what visions;

and now Verlaine retires at once to the basement  
 where the brick ovens burned through the heat of July  
 to cook the herring, the smoke rising up into the  
 eyes and ears of Arthur reminding him of a larger fire  
 that burns further below; the Hell to which he's somehow bound,  
 knowing that he must go—  
 beyond the fixed end, rise higher than the clouds sailing around  
 his head; he must be left alone so that he could grow stronger,  
 bearing his fate like a mission to roam; a reason to go  
 beyond pride and the wooden legs that he would walk into  
 the pangs of death in Assyria, my God! and the agonies  
 and beyond that the thin chance for the alchemy  
 he dreamt of, the final transformation,  
 Music eternal! Ah youth, perhaps then . . .





MALDEN, MASSACHUSETTS



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