

Eunoia Eye to Eye: A MoMa Sestina

“The wheelmen, when wet, wrest the wheel.”

~ Christian Bök

Eunoia, this is not a new aesthetic or epistemology about beauty, what ends undergird Wittgenstein’s wit, pronouncements of logic, any subject under Novalis and this noonday sky, of the theory of symbolism trumping names, of the theory of types being categorical squares, pointy corners overlapping, inward spiral into an nth number of trapezoids colliding, more intoned inside, artifice as objects seen *sub specie aeternitatis*, happy despite eulogies and

euphemisms, or toasting revisioned lives, what possibility got shored up and unraveled, red mountain of origami tigers dissolved in acid rain, timed to end November, feast days from St. Martin’s to the long road home, warm inside over Rudolf Stingel’s oil and enamel, forever untitled, clean, pristine under Isaac and flammable evergreens, and fathers simplifying things, hands over an old hangar where theory died, muted mirrors of the same, buoyed names

easing into veins, a new tractate, of artists talking to artists, about renaming us as Orsini did, as if tapping Austen on her rough crinoline, lily skin and naked shoulders to shimmer her politics, scabs hidden, layered hem over oval pouches, old coins strapped to the shin, knobs for knees, tassels ending in a ring around her ankles, tattoos of rock pigeons peeping through, under Ancona’s bridge of dreams, where Angelo Ferretti sits forlorn, waits inside

empty-handed, pensive, open to meet halfway, across twin stairwells inside, undercroft covered in linen, soft folds, each floral motif inscribed, named, never pointing somewhere else, like our lost hours, or puzzled faces under orange whorls, of *No. 2*, Pollock redrawing its setting sun, million bulbs and intensely, light of coals from kilns, length of the Cardo finding a dead end as if it needed to rest, Gerhard Richter’s Antelio glass as definitive, over

everybody’s outstretched arms, big palms beckoning or begging for leftover Ungers and Unwin blueprints, their umbrella vault, Indic relics housed inside, numinous in their backlit shapes, awkward form, edges, shards, sharp ends, overhang of raw emotion, like Luy Tuymans’ pink ballroom reddening, and in relief, a dollhouse and a fortalice falling into Noguchi’s garden of names, an allegorical portrait, Alessandro Allori as Mercury slaying Argus under

eleven of Jupiter’s orbits, his hundred oracular eyes a sea of blue under unused panels of basswood and sheet metal, on which we stand, hover over Narcissus, himself over a loveless lake, an opaque pond by his side, and our prayers too, that no one is left behind, to die, limits and regret inside,

in a labyrinth of rivers, the closing of our eyes to forget history, as named
as every mural and painting here, like Juno surrounded and alone, the end

like backdrops dropped in, under Wittgenstein's solidity, doors bookending
our afternoon, where faith and hope sit side by side, over us returning and
wondering what being in love looks like, inside this sun terrace unnamed.

* The epigraph to this acrostic sestina is an excerpt from the poem "Chapter E" by Christian Bök. The author's 2001 book, *Eunoia*, is a "univocal lipogram, in which each chapter restricts itself to the use of a single vowel", the title itself being the shortest word in English to include all five vowels. Eunoia means "beautiful thinking". Within Wittgenstein's philosophy are indications of an aesthetic theory, with the idea that "ethics and aesthetics are one". The Latin phrase "sub specie aeternitatis" translates as "under the aspect of eternity". This poem previously appeared in the poetry collection, *Sanctus Sanctus Dirgha Sanctus*.

Chariot of All Others

Where are we — *is there a name for this moment?*

This moment in time and place will become a dream.
A dream of a memory,
 that sort of clairvoyance.

As if all love was already written, had been in all time.

Did I tell you I found your name inscribed on a leaf?

The leaf had a name, like your name.

It was a name, universal like a name for all things.

It was memorable, but we forgot it
as soon as we'd arrived — in the Ashram of Forgetting.

My mind is holding on, the grand love of the image
 and the mirage.

You, standing in a chariot, a chariot of mirrored sides.

Vow of Vows

Don't run away from this,
 this anxiety already written.

Thread of feelings, like songs enmeshed.

The first song asks us if we remember.
The second song asks us what feelings we remember.
The third song is about remembrance, and death.

This death is a slow dying, a slow burn.

Like incense in mid-air, trapped in a hymn.

[Insert mystic scene]

[St Benedict inserts himself, his angular frame
 of bone and meat and blood and water.
 Of soup, and what swirls under,
 the eternal tugging.]

We kneel, as unconscious
as the act is conscious — this entrapment.

This knowingness between obligation and deliberation.

Like love as duty, when every reason defies reason.

Earlier Morning

There is no use
of memory in this.

There is no there.
There is no point of view.

There is no referentiality.

There is no intertextuality.

There is an emerging image;
the shadow of a hill.

Cape Comorin.

Wooden lid placed over a well.

The well's mouth, as with the boy.

Dead boy.

Francis Xavier over dead boy.

New life,
then Coulao and Multao.

Mary Had A Little Lamb

Did Sylvia Plath turn off the radio?
Did Anne Sexton watch a movie that day?
Did Lyn Hejinian buy the blue dress?
Did Lorraine Niedecker hike up The Alps?
Did Emily Dickinson take the bus home?
Did Nina Simone have sugar in her tequila?
Did Nina Bari count her nail clippings?
Did Nina Siciliana ever write a Spenserian sonnet?
Did Anne Bradstreet try to jump off the Arbella?
Did Anna Akhmatova bury her red shoes?
Did Elizabeth Bishop pierce her ears herself?
Did she use a sterilized sewing machine needle?
Was the needle broken in half?
Was it a size 70, European sizing please?
Was the needle on the armrest on Tuesday?
The Tuesday she completed *A Cold Spring*?
Was the doily in *Filling Station* her mother's?
Was her father's monkey suit at the auction?
Was it at the museum of Ante-Modernists?
Did Elizabeth Bishop call herself Mary at the museum?
Was it Mary as in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu?
If the answer is yes to all of the above, answer this.
What did the third Mary do with the last lama?

* This poem first appeared in *Apophenia: Forty-one Dada Dilemmas*.

dedans :: inside

“This commune is not a radical idea if you allow your head to get around it.” The medicine woman is alone at home, her own home much like the other huts here. The huts are built on stilts, architecturally magnificent because of how these homes are kept cool in this tropical heat. There is poultry underneath the hut, and two wild boars fenced in at the back. One is lying down, almost on its back, as if dead if not for its gruff snorting and sudden jerking of its hind legs. The other is walking within its enclosure, its thick tusks near the ground, sometimes raking the sand. “We’re so close to the equator. This is what Malinowsky must have felt,” Gigi’s lover said, when he first saw these huts. “Might as well be Papua New Guinea, if you ask me.” He came with the same combination of reverence and bad humor. He explained this behavior to Gigi. That beneath his drivel was a great deal of reserve. Because what was to come always astonished him in ways beyond the commonplace and comic. “It’s terrible knowing you won’t be laughing at what you’re seeing in a year or two,” he said. Today, he is behaving himself, seated in front of the medicine woman, who has invited Gigi to tea. It is a tea meant for two, a woman-to-woman talk, it seems to Gigi. But Gigi has brought her lover along. Anything that needs saying might as well be said to him. Both are included in everything, that’s the pact. That’s the agreement whenever they travelled. The medicine woman looks at Gigi, then at her lover, taking a half step as if trying to get a better look at him. She turns to look at a woman kneeling by the door, who calmly rises to get an extra teacup and saucer from the kitchen.

rara avis :: a rare bird on this earth

The woman who saw the angel has a special place in this congregation. She still sits with everyone else, but someone invariably rises, to let her have his seat. The woman has a gift, it's a rare gift, and everyone wishes they had it. The stories are various, the truth of her account now blurred, in as many shades as the times it's been retold. The angel is said to have appeared by the back wall, its arms by its side. "It had arms?" Geronimo asked the woman standing to his right, cocking his head as if genuinely interested. "Its mouth was open," the woman added, "as if it had something to tell us. But no sound came out. It had an aura of light around it. This aura grew slighter around its hips, and I saw that it had no knees or legs." By now, Geronimo was looking straight ahead, at the altar. The medicine woman was behind it, her eyes closed. The front wall had a sideboard, and arranged on it were numerous religious artefacts. "Looks like Freud's room," Geronimo whispered to Gigi once. "It's syncretic here, eh? I've seen this elsewhere as well. It seems efficient, this all-embracing gesture, but I don't think that's the intent behind it. I don't know if they're aware of the conflation, not that it's off the mark or anything, everything being symbolic anyway." To Geronimo, the sighting or visitation was also symbolic. Rather, the way the story had run in all directions. It was symbolic of a need for this community – not commune, as everyone likes it – to have something material to hold onto. Something like their land back. The farms, the rice in them. And a real hope. Their children having real schools, with real classrooms. Chalkboards. Textbooks. Actual teachers. Never mind an ideological worldview, this community needed the simple mundane, their heads so lost to the transcendental and otherworldly, they needed anchors tied to their feet to bring them back to reality.