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Editor: Eric Melbye

Segue is published once a year in August. We accept submissions of high quality fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction between January 1 and April 30 (closed May through December), and writing about writing year-round via email. Before submitting, please read past issues to understand the sort of work we publish, then read our submission guidelines.

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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Street of Crocodiles (B.Q.)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author Notes</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Street of Crocodiles (B.Q.)

for Bella

1

From what heights! This world through glass,
Our minds casting forward and back…
We set eye to detail, the 2D minutiae turning vasted depths,
Like an audio track clicking in without sound,
Just the sound of itself without sound,
An empty room, an open cage
The moment when everything goes into slow motion
Then cuts back with fury, your body hurtling:

Plunge aurora air!
Glow the dark clouds!
Solar checkpoint!
To where the winds toss and the weather is.

Can we refuse the fall and destination’s streets?
Can we refuse the eye and its odours?
Can we refuse the city that will us refuse?

And the weather hastened after us a bitter gift,
The cold a freeze beyond respite,
And thesheeting rain obscured your face,
And my eyes wandered in darkness,
And my voice, the empty streets.

Spittle is a blood strand paled,
And brighter is the filament that never will repeat

my revenant.
2

of the creak
no one speaks
makes you wonder
(made him pray)
she’s a loner
it’s no thing
till again felt it suck
phloem like
without effort

mmm

so I said to him I said
‘do it again and you’ll make me cry’
and he did it again or didn’t
and I cried or didn’t
because/in spite of
it’s all the same again

mmm

smile a measure
weep a cup
that’s what I said the vague summer long
like my mother did before me
and her mother did before she did
waiting for a ray
such a thing
blessed wing
blessed wing

3

Do these rooms do and how do they?
This pulsing city, this stertorous heart,
Faces set in every wall.
Do they listen? Do they watch?
Is it a civic art or structural necessity?
I don’t ask and they don’t say,
But my body soon learns like a dog on the leash:
The fumes will tangle you, the thread still lead you on.  
The knot untied will knot again, and by no thought of hand.  
Already my fingers tremble like a moth in a lamp.

Sic, kem, mal mal, dumele dumele  
Pa pa, pa pa. Gom.  
Paper wrap these meat dreams, but will they fit?  
This mapped flesh, will it indicate?  
Here, every image has its double,  
And every part achieves a world.  
My body revolts, is not my own.  
And so the scarecrow cries again:  
‘A flame! Aflame!  
There goes my home!’  
The old world turns and burns again.

4

Peep to the hole get your eye show free, ladies and gentlemen!  
Put your eye there, but not too close to the soul snatcher!  
Put your eye there see your eye gaze back!  
Put your eye there and watch it beg for more!  
What you gazing with?  
A slobbering eye?  
And when your eye gone?  
You got a weeping nose and a wailing tongue.

5

What’s in the details?  
Will it turn back time?  
Each division’s a composition,  
The places switch:  
Denominator to numerator  
given time.
Clockwork(s)...
the metronome fled
moon and back the fragrance now
moon and back and not forgot
bloodleaf, cravensnow

In my new clothes I wait for you
(The museum enacts a frozen time)
In my old time I search for you
Stitching to the seconds’ pace

The world grows grey
A faded picture craven cold

But interstice a bursting light
In my new and in my old
Author Notes

Joshua Comyn is a South African writer and researcher living in Melbourne, Australia. His current research interests concern the intersection of literature with information and systems theory and their relevance to questions of subjectivity. His artistic work is at present an extended poetry and film project, the mapping of poetry onto films, films as poetic palimpsests. While not overt, the theoretical concerns of his research haunt his creative work.

About the Work

My ‘film poetry’ work began with Alfred Hitchcock’s Psycho, a film which began haunting me, and that haunted my notions of normality, both ethical and creative. I watched it over and over. Then I started watching it like an editor might, pausing the DVD, running it back and forth, playing it in slow motion, re-examining moments, writing down lines, and generally infecting myself with its details.

This experience led me to write about other films as well, one of which is The Street of Crocodiles by The Brothers Quay, a film which is in turn inspired by the book of the same title by Bruno Schulz. I haven’t read Schulz’s book, and didn’t want to before my poem was written because I didn’t want the book to interfere with my work on the film. The ‘film work’ I am engaged in is critical—I am interpreting the film as I write, but without necessarily trying to stick to the ‘meaning intentions’ of the original work; I am making a interpretation of the original as I ‘rewrite’ it, creating a parallel, alternate world.

The Brothers Quay’s film The Street of Crocodiles is a powerful, and powerfully ambiguous work of art, but utterly precise in its ambiguity. It is filled with utterly exacting lacunae. Despite this it enacts a consistent narrative experience. For my part, I wanted to write something that could haunt the interstices of the film but which was consistent in itself. I wanted to write a ghost story for ghosts.