© 2010 Segue online literary journal
ISSN 1939-263X

All rights reserved. This publication may be freely distributed only in its entirety and without modification, and only for private use. It may not be sold for profit. Excerpts may only be reproduced and distributed with permission from the copyright owners, except for classroom use or in the case of brief quotations used for book reviews and interviews. The creative works published in Segue do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of its staff or of Miami University.

Issue 9 Fall 2010

Editor: Eric Melbye
Managing Editor: Michelle Lawrence

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.

Segue
www.mid.muohio.edu/segue

Miami University Middletown
www.mid.muohio.edu
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Just Outside the Pied Cow</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cities in One Place</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Existentialist’s Judgment Day</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author Notes</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Just Outside the Pied Cow

Thus talked Zarathustra in the city he loved, which is surnamed "The Pied Cow."
—Nietzsche

“quiet desperation.”
—Thoreau

Most camels don’t survive to children.
Beasts of burden pace the desert
of dragon scales as house cats. The weight
of family alone makes rising from the doomed
a crushing heave for the bulk. “You shall,
you shall” flares from the bellies
of teachers and police until manes
and backbones spread as backyard mulch.

Spitting at a front lawn refreshes the first insult. The reptile plants its neighborhood
claim for humps of youth sunning themselves
for a load. Fierce devotion to chimeras

and to the play of a knight on a dune
call to Ovid’s bedtime readers before
they are buried or eaten. World heeders
dance alone at each morning of their lives.
The Cities in One Place

Mayor of memory reconstructs
each epoch’s architecture for
the citizen’s inkling to conquer,
inhabit, or negotiate. Unearthing

obelisks and coliseums, Madeline
cake’s archeologist enshrines the ability
to walk in museums of intentions
and attempts. Spoons and sifters

and photo albums materialize
the forgotten of natural disasters
and of human conflict before wind
or warrior again snaps fingers.

To think on one’s feet across town
logs a mnemonic journey through
allusion’s Alps or Daedalus’ prison.
City foundations and infrastructure

eMOTE the fictive logic of reverie.
The Acropolis’ apocalypse surrounds
the commuter as slowly as its construction.
Lifetime’s experience confronts the monk

of progress who remains undaunted,
even though the upright insect knows
how every cloistered colonist discovered
an end among the disfigured statues.
The Existentialist’s Judgment Day

Bad faith parts for its Moses,
but no one walks upon absurdity.
Houses on both sides of the streets
own gills squirming in bills for

abandoned dreams while the lonely
leader slogs through irrational
commandments. Disoriented by duty,
the hectic heretics possess no time

to smell the senseless air of things
and only grasp what they can grasp
with hands. Keeping to his individual
path, the tablet smasher begins

and begins with the irrelevant flower
and weeps when efficiency's sea
closes on the pursuing salesmen.
An old testament sinks everyone

to their knees, but condemned
for their false god, so many
neighbors flop around cul-de-sacs
with fishbowls on their heads.
Author Notes

Rich Murphy has taught writing and literature for 24 years at Bradford College, Emmanuel College and now at Virginia Commonwealth University. His second collection of poems, Voyeur, was the 2008 Gival Press Poetry Award winner. Other credits include a book of poems, The Apple in the Monkey Tree, the chapbooks Great Grandfather, Family Secret, Phoems for Mobile Vices, and Hunting and Pecking, and poems and essays in hundreds of journals and refereed journals, including Reconfigurations: A Journal for Poetics Poetry / Literature and Culture and Journal of Ecocriticism. He lives in Marblehead, Massachusetts.

About the Work

Each one of the poems was written with the concept that each of the thinkers had in mind (Nietzsche, Freud, and Sartre), and then I attempted to apply it in some way to today’s world, responding to the thinker’s idea. My recent poems have responded to poets, fiction writers, and thinkers so that I could compile a collection of poems that allowed me to correspond with these people. I have titled the collection “Stolen Goods.” I see each poem in the collection as a palimpsest, or a séance of sorts, or my entering conversations of culture. The challenge for me was to try to push beyond my understanding of their works to add my thinking on each of their ideas. I was pleased to merely allow a contemporary understanding, or suggestion of tone to stand in for many of my replies in the correspondence.

“Just Outside the Pied Cow” for instance is a response to Nietzsche’s introduction to Thus Spoke Zarathustra. The reader is introduced to how one becomes a child as an adult or becomes what Nietzsche called the “cosmic dancer.” The cosmic dancer has taken on his/her load as a camel might (as heavy as that may be), has become a lion to conquer the desert, and then has slain a dragon of “thou shall nots.” The idea is that the cosmic dancer knows the ‘how’ of living with the rules and roles placed upon him/her by society and knows how and when to play with and even break the rules for his/her own purposes of creating.

“The Cities in One Place” is responding to Freud’s idea that cities are layers of archeology before they are buried, that cities are many cities within the most current one. In his book Civilization and Its Discontents, Freud writes “Let us, by flight of imagination, suppose that Rome is...a psychical entity with a similarly long and copious past—and entity, that is to say, in which nothing that has once come into existence will have passed away and all the earlier phases of development continue to exist alongside the latest one.” Here he explains that cities may be palimpsests also: a city rewriting itself. The word implies an unconscious communication or deliberate re-writing across time. The passage spooked me for decades. This idea was of interest to me because cities then become much like the palimpsest in writing. That idea pleases me because it also shows its relation to the shared language idea in contemporary thought.

“The Existentialist’s Judgment Day” uses Sartre’s “bad faith” guide post as one might Moses’ idea of bad faith in a contemporary neighborhood. Recognizing one’s total freedom seems an absurd responsibility to the everyday citizen busy making money and attempting to follow faithfully a religion’s rules. However, There are no excuses for Sartre for whom freedom is a responsibility—not a hooray word but a boo-woo word. The most difficult part of writing these
poems is finding the metaphor that I can turn into irony. The “bad faith” idea was easy to write about as soon as I connected it with organized religion. When I see the possibilities of irony through the connection, I usually have little trouble writing.

While writing poetry that “echoes” and “corresponds” with earlier and contemporary writers and thinkers, I approach writing poetry sensitive to metaphors that can be turned into ironic language that might be used. From there I take the language seriously so that I might have “fun” with it. Ironist poems drive concrete surfaces to address oblique possibility’s express ways, giving direction to the distant relations to call attention to lost relations and family resemblances.

Rich Murphy on the Web

www.follymag.com/files/Folly_October-09.pdf

www.counterexamplepoetics.com/2009/05/three-poems-from-rich-murphy.html/

www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMRdWmBgXgA

www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlkunkNA80k

www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=30700

clockwisecat.blogspot.com/