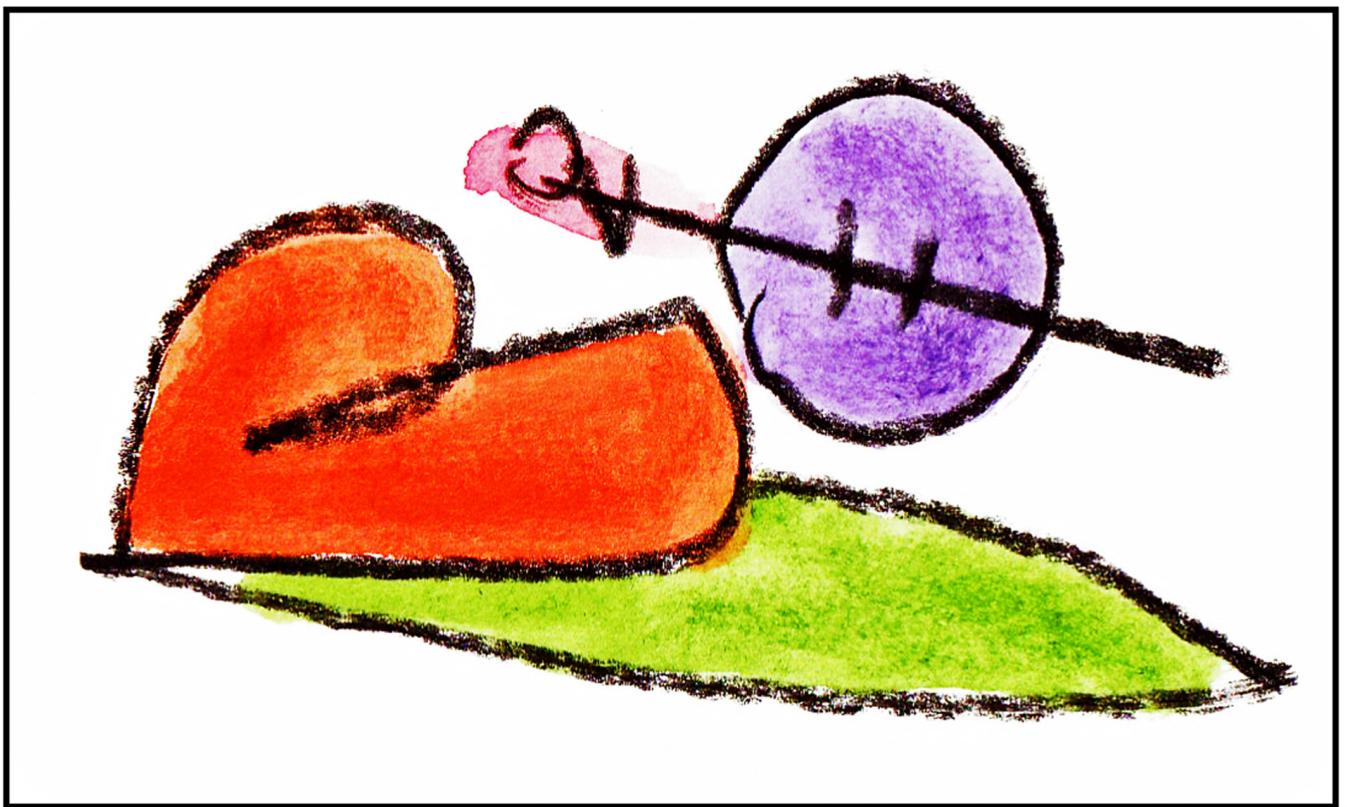


STREET CAKE

experimental writing magazine

issue 83



@ michael moreth – idealistic

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issue 83

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The Stasis Before Stages

page numbered like the days is,
the stasis before stages

in this space
to lift and anoint
after dipping the self,
after dipping a joint
in angel dust, in platinum,
in the Lethe, to see
the holy water reflecting the diamonds
in the pastor's watch,
to see the faces of his rural flock
while his children text through the sermon,
tomorrow, the other kids will do their homework
using wifi in the McDonald's parking lot

I think of hunger, I think of cancer
eating a jaw

in this space
I hear the televangelist
with a metastasized miracle,
I hear the salesman
of eternal bunker food,
I hear a nationalist song
through the walls like mother weeping

the only valentines these days
are medical bills with commas
like railroad spikes
restraining the freight

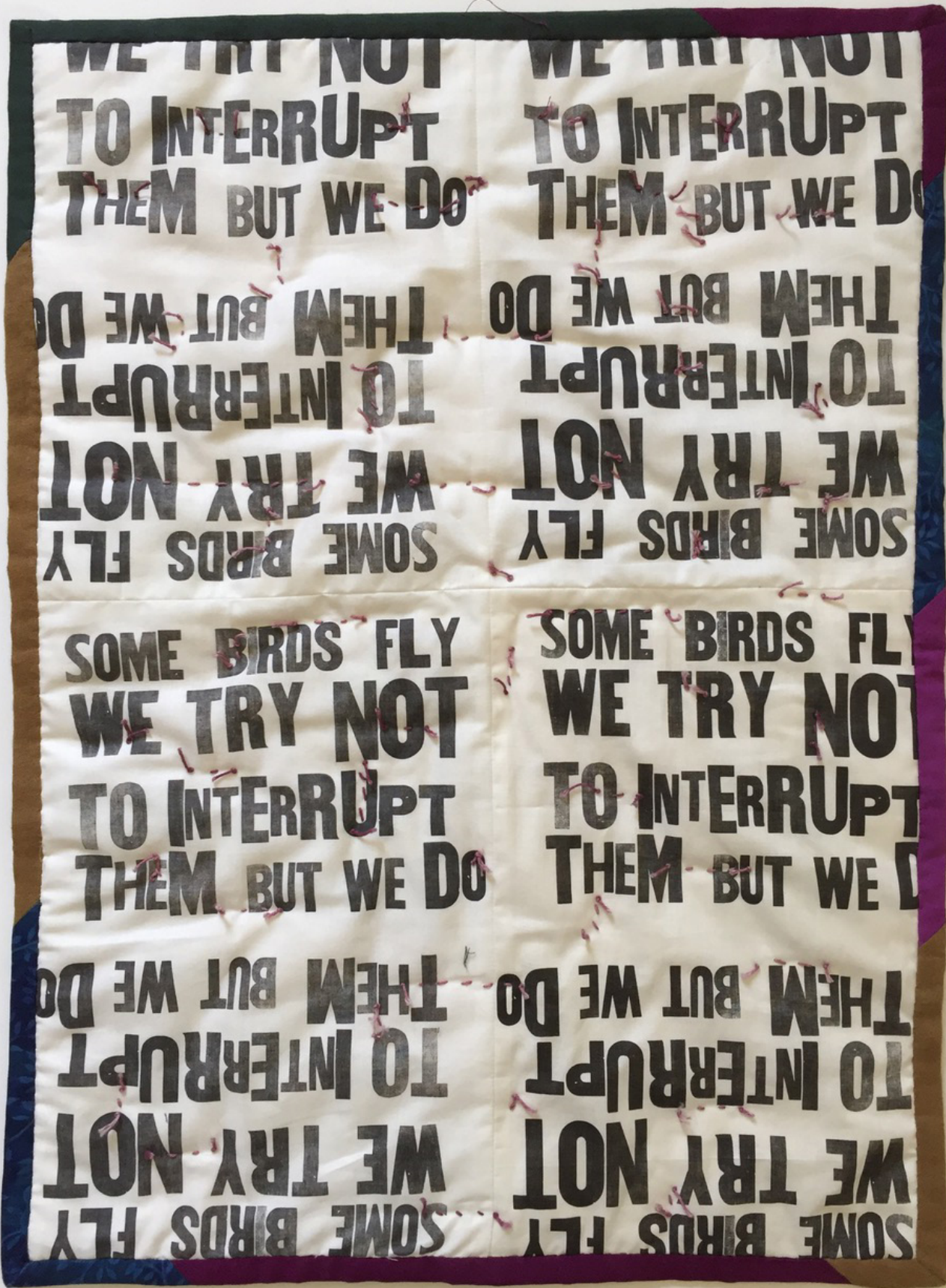
and this is what
we have done with freedom, oh father?
the descendants of immigrants
from the interwar years
now say no more are welcome

in this space

I will see it all crumble
and I will see all I ever dreamed
as it is

I will laugh to tears
having taken it so serious





Coffee with a madman



coffee #1

I am having a coffee with a stranger.

(I bought him from a flea market)

He does not eat / drink too much

but has eyes like sharp rock cracks in windows; hungry, wet... and waiting. Inside his hat is where the pigeon's roost, but we are the only two people in the womb that know that. My one-handed companion has so much linear expression he contains far too much

ego.

ergo... (he is)

expression – less

His white collar is the rubbish bin of utopia – meaning it is of course the flaw in a flawless world, thus we return to the crack in the window (we live inside a sycophantic circle of which no one is on the outside)

He is so afraid of gold spoons for they have the capability to take everything he owns away, till he is a drop of ectoplasm within the seafront of desire.

Ask what he wants from you. Ask what he wants - only if you are prepared to hear a rehearsed monologue that makes grown men weep and women's ligaments snap with laughter. All that hullabaloo is not worth question time with the addicts. Go for a dawn pier walk. You will be much better off that way.

Don't forget to bring a coffee.

Since his death this morning, it has become even more important for him to explain life to me over the steam of blacky ink. Like why

belonging is survival (and)

survival is belonging

It would take a landslide of small, shrivelled brown beans hurtling down Belvoir street (where we converse) to make us move. I hide him in my bag just in case, but to my horror his eyes stare through the tough white cotton.

Stare.... Why do you stare?

##

##

I order a warm croissant with jam.

I miss him already. To make this all better I sketch him on a napkin using a dulled-out pencil, ripping the friable fabric when I shade in the coat. I imagine nerve endings within the napkin and itch the inside of my elbow till I bleed a bit. When I am finished scratching both skin and tissue, I sit back to look at the masterpiece.

Somehow, he looks as if he is crying a single worm of solitude. I do not sketch again. I now know **far too much**.

The Curse of Knowledge is the passage from infant to adult; I am somewhere along the way. My father's absence lies down on the train tracks and prevents me moving any further. If he were a freelance carpenter, I would ask him to build me a bookcase and single bed.

Oh, and a table for the man in the frame to rest on. But he is neither a father nor a carpenter, so it doesn't matter much. He is just an outline on a train track headed south.

I remove the man from the bag. **Now**, he can only view life through the bars of prison, he is resentful at restriction, and this will never change. I have permanently altered the stranger's outlook. Damnit.

I take the golden spoon from its saucer and hide his eyebrows with it; he is now daring me to care for something small and vulnerable that I usually would like to kill. Croissant crumbs fall out my mouth onto his trench jacket and I commit a multitude of sins to wipe them away – in doing so, my hand slips and his eyebrows reappear. He is deathly angry at me, under all that gold.

I want to tell him of my love for jam red mugs with matching plates and also the gurgle of the last drops of water down the bath plughole. His eyebrows stop me from continuing my list and besides, caffeine is pressing against the infected valves of my heart. No one looks through the peephole before letting it all flood in. It is all **far too late now**.

Caffeine comes rushing in as if the dam has burst. And... who is swimming on the uttermost string of water? Oh...! Oh.

My photo frame man enters the heart chamber commonly known as

The Atrium.

Suddenly that long coat I once admired is stuck to my pulmonary artery, causing undulations in blood pressure. Increasingly unsure of my own self-worth, I wipe the tear off my cheek using the back side of four fingers and my skin shifts off my cheekbone. As if it never rested there with such peace in the first place.

I have had enough excitement to last seven years. I place the man back into the bag with my light head, ignore the stares, then we head out - as explorers of emotion.

Nobody is left to clear the dirty plates away. The landslide got them all yesterday.

coffee #2

We are having another coffee together; not picking up the thread we left off, but putting new sheets on the stripped bed and beginning again. Today is the day for new beginnings. The café we inhabit sits next to a river. The laughing frog and I...

Sip.

(mmm)

I redefine desire when I look at his hand.

In due course, I will write to the papers and let them know of my extraordinary discovery, titled 'redefinition'. I am the best columnist in all the land, I'm actually quite famous (I tell my framed lover this static information).

As I contemplate the burdening fame, my love for the stranger sits in a neat space outlining his grey hand...

I do not touch it for fear of allowing the tetanus (which has been chasing me since birth) to get inside. The tetanus freezes your muscles in time, I am aware my photo frame man inherited the *clostridium tetani* when he was first created, so am careful not to upset him with my real lies (he will surely rea-lise).

I am ever so sensitive when it comes to bacteria... I also know he has a heart made of galvanized steel, so it will not be attacked and will never cease to beat inside his tense state. Poor, poor creature... I am so very kind and loving and sweet and sensitive...

If only inland revenue could see me now!

If only the taxman of times tables would walk past our flatland furniture... that'd show him!

They redefined society around three years ago; the death of working class as the driving political force turned us into troglodytes. Turned us into (pre)

socialites.

The hierarchy of the rich and the poor is something I wish neither to climb up nor slide down. I am happy where I am; in the coffee shop of beginners, sipping beside my blank lover. We don't let society hold us back. We don't let dentists hold us back.

Only a million bumble bees would understand the new relationship I have formed with this picture frame man; growing like a tumour on the underside of my brain.

Only anna kavan would understand me now.

And when I reach for his hand, I get exactly what I want. Shoelace tendons and the bone from Sunday roast chicken sticking out.

I get exactly what I want. His hand without all the trimmings.

Mmm.

The river shifts water back and forth, it is moving with eternity. It has been accustomed to change since the triceratops' great tongue licked the salt off the rocks. I am red with jealousy for

this river beside me. I am boiling up with anger... How dare river banks be so used to change that they wake all calm and placid and normal. How **dare** change make me so **afraid**.

All my unborn children have arranged a morning concert that I am late to... I am instead having a streetside coffee with a photo frame and I am running behind the time. Even the bloody clocks have shoes nowadays.

With laces made from dead men's super-digital flexor tendons. Didn't you know?

I drink black coffee rapidly, eyes looking to the sky, and inherit heartburn almost immediately. I begin whispering a prayer to my lord; my paternal sperm creature.

My unborn children will sing me songs of Monmouth and Missy Higgins in a bit. They sing just to make me weep. My unborn children remain nameless because of prostaglandin tablets being eaten like sweets and codeine for the chaser. I am the mother of the orchestra in the echoing moments before sleep takes over – this is when I am naked, wet, and shaking.

My head is lost within the melody of the soldiers. My neck is lost to the toast accompaniment. My egg is a fairy egg; yolkless, void of life. Not as delicious for breakfast.

I must hurry up and spoil you/ greet you/ taste you. I must hurry up and be the mother you couldn't be (almost too late).

The new definition of desire has been written on the blackboard for the pigeons to read, digest, read and worse... **remember**.

I desire complete unattachment most days. But today, I want to find some rope and tie us up. The pigeons might peck our eyes out, but we won't care – we have **love!**

They will take over soon, you know.

It will be **us** against **them**.

And by '**us**', I mean my deceased coffee companion and the pigeons.

And by '**them**', I mean everything else – elephants, the bubonic plague, mycelium.

I don't have a side.

I am liminal.

The picket line runs up my body and tickles me till I giggle like an infant. I am neither child nor adult.

Remember?

An American lady sits beside us.

We quieten down.

Hotels are ever so i t chhhhhy, photo frame (didn't we learn that last night!)

The river complains itself through the gutter of land, I am nonchalant about the water and prove this with a quick whistle. Then I blow my nose on my scarf. Colonisation of the wet land is current and important and something the politicians forget. I love the man in the frame according to how much I owe the tax man.

I **can** get used to change quicker than it feels. Just right now, it feels I won't adapt and will instead freeze over. Just now, it feels like things are going to last forever. The journey has only begun but it is going to last forever. Unease is a dirty little trick.

Malaise is even worse.

I have aligned my view to the political preferences of sewer rats and realise...

I was wrong
 all along.

The referendum is futile! It will take me seven years to recover from the shock and when the mayor of Monmouth turns my life support off, I can finally exhale a lifetime of dirty rotten sins.

One last request before I go!

A jam red scarf please, for I have been warned certain areas of the underworld are deathly cold.

The American lady says, 'have a lovely one' and I know she means have a lovely death. I share one remaining wisp of thought with my photo framed lover. It is a comparison between dentists and builders.

The dentists use cement for root canal surgeries because it is cheap and creamy.

The builders use cement for telegraph poles because it is grey and sticks well into the gums of pothole streets.

I ask my lover if the streetcleaners can be the toothbrush? But
he died yesterday so doesn't say much anymore. Just waits to be put back in my bag.

I sigh and accept defeat. No one wants my bullshit metaphors.

If I Buy You A House

Consider not the lilies of the field lest they take note of thee. If some states are defined by those who live there, others are by those who don't. Eyewitnesses may go to their rewards and wait then go to their rewards again. My signature is my denial. Spare the dog and spoil the cat. The received wisdom's implication is eyewitnesses are born and die alone. Sweet Adeline, my competition, render unto Thor that which is Zeus's. To protect my innocence the pronouns of my pronouns have been changed. Embedded in the military I become one.

To be on an airplane is to have a unique column and a unique row. With Gertrude Stein with Gertrude Stein to beg to differ. It's not yellow if it's not a yellow cat, by intersection softly sculpted, free of incidentals. Wait, eyewitnesses, there's more. I wouldn't see the new moon if the new moon were a cinder block. Your Georgia isn't mine. Platonic is to empathy as antipodes' eyewitnesses to bide. If I buy you a house you may stop speaking to me. Wait, eyewitnesses, there's more. Confession breaks the causal chain. The Lindbergh baby's saved.

**When I Write While
Standing To Make
Room for My
Toddler Who Colors
on the Page**

I gain more vertical
direction; I grow a
giraffe neck and
ostrich legs; I soar,
dive at 186 miles per
hour like a peregrine
falcon; I see places
that I've never seen
before—the dust on
the top of my
refrigerator, the tips
of the tallest trees, the
top of the Eiffel
Tower; I gain the
posture of a ballerina,
float through space
like an astronaut,
jump like a
basketball-playing
kangaroo; I catapult
over the ivory gates,
shatter glass ceilings,
free Rapunzel from
her tower; I sashay
with the stars, then
dive beneath the
depths of the ocean to
jam with the
jellyfish; I return to
my pen and paper
cold and wet and
dripping with star
dust, just in time to
add the final period.

Instructions For Living Like Tofu

be like whoever's nearest
softening in a saute pan
coagulating soy milk
dying to be buffaloed

jerked spiced riced
burrito bowled baked
into chocolate cream pie

ubiquitousness is nothing

terrible since marinades
drown your pores with tang
plump you like tiny teriyaki
pillows of misshapen mush

cherished only by sleepers

like you who surrender
give up resisting the chef
with his spinning knives

reeling overhead whistling
a Sinatra song as he chops
you into uniform squares
till "My Way's" last note

The Call



The Call

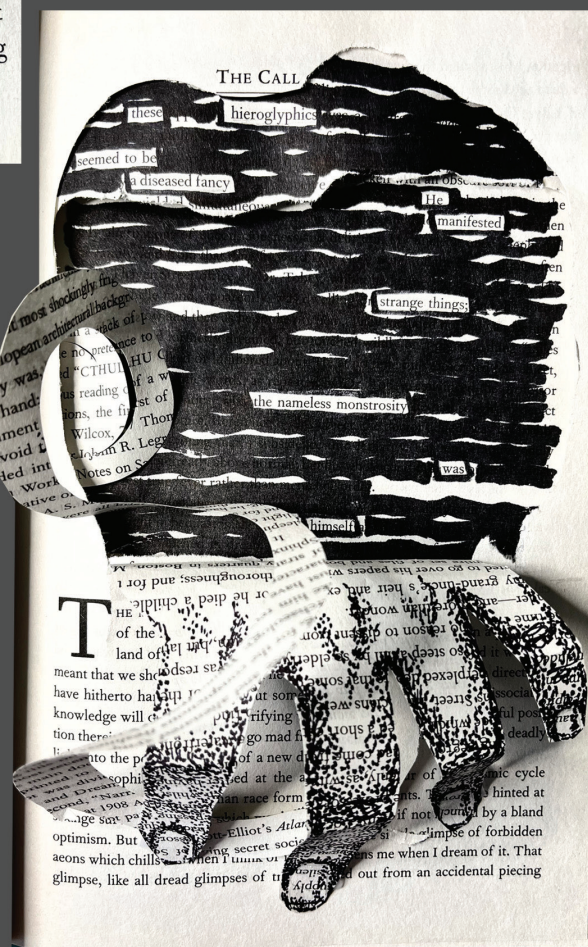
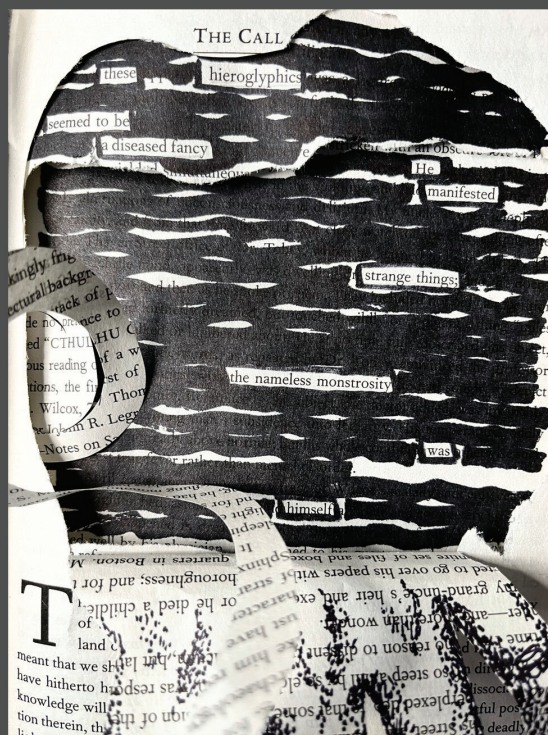
these hieroglyphics
seemed to be a

diseased fantasy
He manifested

strange things;
the nameless monstrosity

was

himself



Free Consultation

amy marques

Do you or a loved one **plant** Dignified Hope ?

have you **literally** stopped The Things You Love ?

SUNSET your dreams ?

even worse, have you

CONSUMED **A** LIFESTYLE **To** SUIT **tradition** ?

IN THE FUTURE

believe in A New Frame of Mind !

= not working to full potential,

Care better about life again!

so tomorrow Let's :

MIND **THE** garden

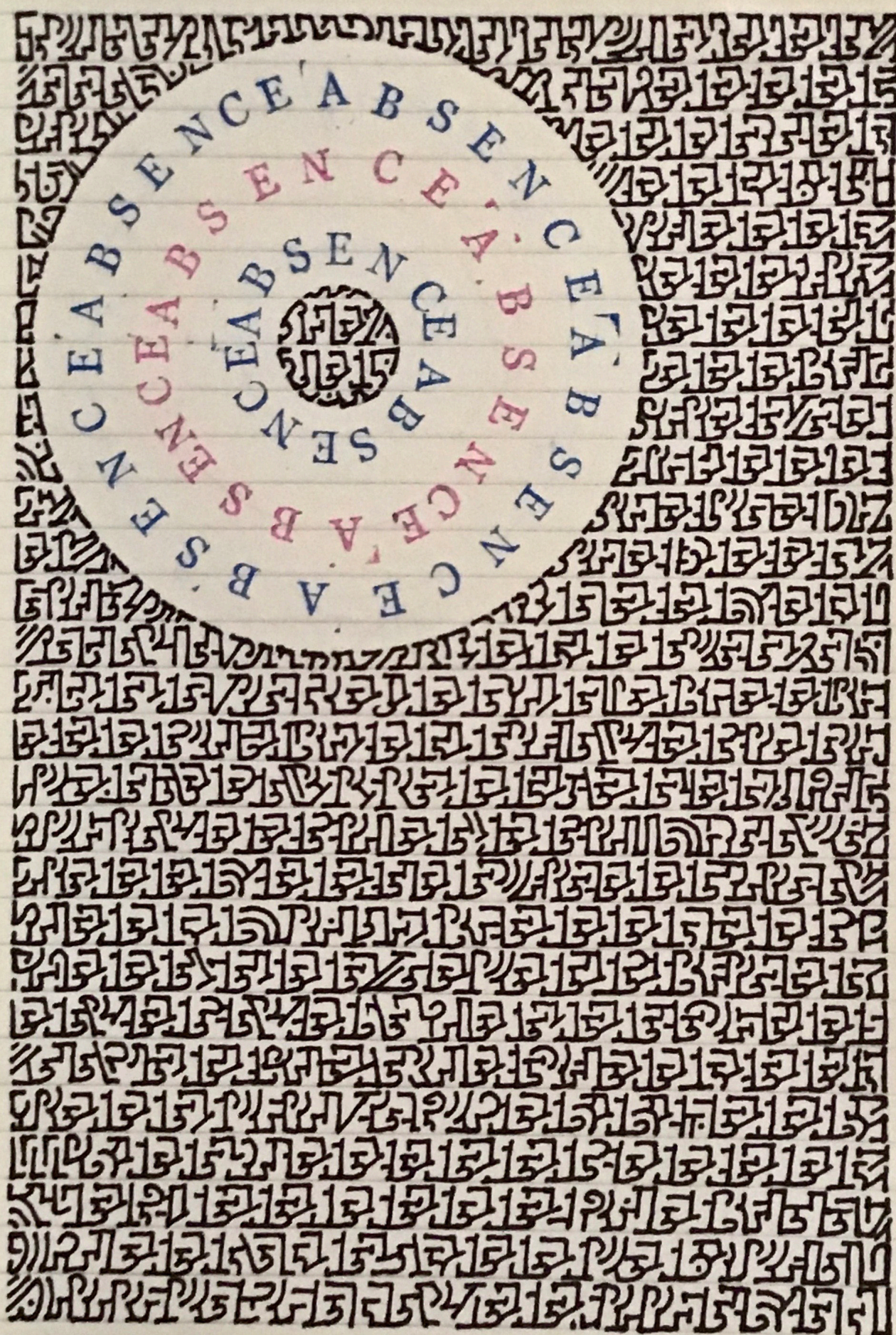
Bring to life candid conversations

Helping You Hear Your life

hearing YOUR today to make it beautiful.

Call us now for a free consultation.





I AM WRINKLED, WORN THIN AND FRAGILE™

001

10/23/89

If thermal ink would have stuck to my
skin, I might have come printed with:

Will read.....\$Enrichment

Will write.....\$Encouragement

Will cry at night....\$Consolation

Will try.....\$Reassurance

Will care.....\$Appreciation

Will struggle and fail.....\$Love

then you'd know the costs, you'd have the
receipt, so maybe it would've been easier
to return me

a manifesto

we must, as writers, at some point,
ask what it is we expect
from the written word.
why do my fingers grip a pen?
why does the pen move?

what good is any of it?

we've complicated matters a good deal
by inventing poetry, the novel,
short stories, even songs.
why would I ever write you a letter?
letters just aren't good enough.

why must you be a poem?

come to the table and I
will tell you what I want from you:
I want you to become bread, wine,
cheese,
I want you to be sour, and hot,
tasteless, I want you to become a
blue diamond,

I want you to be everything but simple words.

SOLSTICE

For Yang Ziyi (杨子屹)

uncover the holy sun

TANG YUAN¹

+

round as a dough as a flour in a rope smooth rolling motion

little dimpled puddings *

wrapped by red red bowls

MA MA MA MA MA +

Want a spoon Here is a spoon 2 by 2

Ridiculous glee U sit in a card board bird BA BA BA

like paper marche restaurant waiter

Resplendent + ah-ah-ah-ah wider absentia insantia

higher! The tilt of the light (the naked sanatorium

*sky)

it burns.

Away, away, out of the blinds

stair

Child of willpower let us drink a toast to + star star stair star

FAMILY matrimony you are stair

alone always there's no other way serenade me drag my

unshatter the long day forever lover never ever cracker lot of hair

I WILL NEVER DIE

pandan² strawberry roses fairy penguins blueberry fish

some kind samaritan.

higher! i said and you obeyed me like a foreign god

parousaic nightmaric kingfisher night

strange strange poison

¹ Tang Yuan: a traditional Chinese dessert made of glutinous rice balls served in a hot broth or syrup. Served during the Lantern Festival or the Winter Solstice.

² Pandan: a tropical plant used widely for flavouring in the cuisines of Southeast Asia.

password poem

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