

OUR VOX

limbic

found

broken

grammars

machine age

programme



rant

heady

automatism

photo

ecstatic

issue zero

journal of the underlying voice

ur VOX

is a journal of the limbic or underlying voice (the *ur*). It embraces all phases of surrealism early and late, experiments in broken and erotic grammars, works of ecstatic religion or unreligion, and heady documents of the machine age (the *vox*). Its literary programme is rooted in our oldest phylogenetics, structured opportunistically from dreams, rant, automatism, and the found.

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What to call this writing, this journal, the particulars

Lee Ballentine

You hold in your hands the prospectus for UR~~X~~VOX, a journal of the limbic or underlying voice (the *ur*). It embraces all phases of surrealism early and late, experiments in broken and erotic grammars, works of ecstatic religion or unreligion, and documents of the machine age (collectively, the *vox*). Its literary programme is rooted in our oldest phylogenetics, structured opportunistically from dreams, rant, automatism, and the found. Yet all this is the journal's programme to be worked-out in print, not mine, which must be acted-out in a real world.

For I must tell you that this editor is a pragmatcian rather than a theoretician; he knows only one way to edit, and that is to use all his eccentricities (some of you know they are considerable) in selecting which threads to pull on among those that come into his hands. *He no longer has any pretense to a lofty perspective on what is authentic.* Receiving your poems is my programme; I intend that this limited circulation and still sketchy issue zero will be enough to induce you to send them.

And what to call this writing? There is a single, definitive, but ultimately inappropriate label that has seduced some: *post-surrealism*. This angular little compound has apparent advantages. It's a search key that librarians, new bookstore hires, and other masters of context are likely to pocket. It does manage to thumb its nose at the posers in every era who've imagined themselves (their only authentic act of imagination) to be surrealists. However as André Breton wrote in *This Quarter* in 1932, albeit of a slightly different population, "unable as yet to treat itself to an ambulance, surrealism simply leaves these individuals by the wayside."

We've passed the end of what may with justice be called the *surrealistic* (though not *surrealist*) century, when eyeballs are juxtaposed with razors daily and both are *for sale*. Like the pillow of the same name, the surrealistic century was hallmarked with the monogram of surrealism. Predictably however, it failed to integrate surrealism's essential spiritual and political character. So it is no surprise that some shrug at the naked *ism* and try to see an improvement in the addition of *post*. Fortunately, and especially as we still have a few poets with real (if I may put it so) and original credentials to resent the insult, it turns out that the *post* is wholly unnecessary.



Surrealism is always and inherently new. Anything posing as surrealism that needs to defend itself against *the new* is by definition no longer surrealism. So the *post* makes a tautology. Surrealism is already post or late surrealism, it was born fully fledged in its mature freedom. Still, other aspects of it have matured. So fragmented is what used to be called the main stream of poetry, one wonders if anyone really believes in its existence now. And in this environment, surprise become difficult. Mature surrealism has learned new strategies to surprise.

URÆVOX adopts an opportunistic strategy; it is willing to be called anything that will not push our poets (we hereby claim you as one of them) away. Let's tell the truth: Poets are always emerging from something old, always entering onto something new. We wish to make a new day in order to *have our day*; in this respect we are no different from our predecessors. In fact, in some cases we *are* our predecessors, having reinvented ourselves for this purpose.

The new day we are making replaces an era which actually ended some time ago although few were awake to notice. The crystalline purity of the marvelous has been smeared with the excremental impurity of the horrific and chopped into regular polygons by new machines and seduced into the inexact, probabilistic, but still beautiful miasma of new equations and the force of new approaches to language, or indeed, to entirely new language. Underneath and out of all these purities and impurities still rises the underlying voice, or URÆVOX. Some of us, once again,

have decided to make a magazine out of it. As before we now have the task of summoning the seriousness this deserves without causing the venture to topple under its own weightiness; we will need to stockpile some antidotes to weightiness,

The particulars. URΞVOX's editor is assisted by several distinguished contributing editors; we call them auditors because after their first role (to write for the journal) their second role is to draw our attention there and here as they see fit. URΞVOX will appear once, or failing that, twice a year. Each odd-numbered issue will have poems by a number of contributors (and perhaps the odd theory) and will be illustrated by found photographs from a notable collection of them. Each even-numbered issue will consist of the work of a single author. Effectively the even numbers will be books and we anticipate giving our auditors, or the other writers they bring to us, very nearly complete freedom to assemble a book that fulfills a personal vision.

You are holding our half-baked and minimalistic *issue zero*, which is not for sale. We will now proceed directly to *issue one* for which we're now reading submissions. Some or all of the contents of *zero* will also make their way to *one* for more public consumption. Submissions must be sent to URΞVOX | P.O. Box 9249 | Denver CO | 80209 | USA and should include an email address if you have one. In addressing the envelope you may, but need not, draw-in the frog, that symbol of the limbic, our alternative to the more typical but no less correct serpent.

A warning, as much to myself as to you. I expect this to be a difficult journal. . . . difficult to place work in, difficult to reduce to *sense*, difficult to dismiss. If it attracts hostility from some quarters I will consider this a mark of success. A well-known poet and editor wrote to me years ago "I consider that surrealism is a very poor mother of invention." The worst fate is to be ignored and then sink down quietly into a comfortable chair. Perhaps we can attract the scorn of those who heap scorn on whatever they don't understand.

If this has come to you, your work is known to us or to our auditors; we have good reason for asking you to submit to URΞVOX. Please send us your most challenging work, and do not take offense if we ask you, whatever your reputation, to try again. This editor reserves his traditional right to reject some or even all submissions. He may even assert new rights: to pad the journal with found texts and crackpot theories, to publish an incredibly slender volume, or in the worst case, to publish nothing further and, like some people he knows, visit Portugal instead! *fin*

Oval's schematic in verse

A husk opens, gives way to somber exile
once figured into the depths of this globe

Core of dust with a mile of sound in
its teeth I've uncertained hourly

Here a perplexed form from nothing strode
claiming umbra

its fullest shade Hollow enticed to
some flaring at dawn, in whips come
off sun

Everything above a purposeful wading
through half-darks, middle tones passing

as a craft in newly wrought sea names
from clear absence a sail

Revolving bridge stored carefully behind
changes in matter, as maps serve as

introduction disconnected along
Lake Begin

Setting the tongue back centuries,
details preserved in Un-world's loam

A room within to behold, laden with
future and future's gulf posed as blue

jewels through himself, brought up to
the surface of thought

Inside, the gull's mineral tears encircle
our waists for salt flint scattered

The congestion of colors here
set hand-in-eye, set hand-in-well

Sun from slope where the verb drops
its twin: the act of concentrated motion

filling the sky where circled another
loose tendril

Brian Lucas



Song towards a supreme friction

*Where the kernel is bound by two dreams
a seam is showing a bit of white flash*

*between leftover curtain and a solidly
miraged divider*

a verb drops

*The middle reflects an audience viewing
another Spring such lasting cataract
supports*

a place beginnings scratch

*for what hope is this sailing—
this seasonal tremolo of
accompanying matter?*

*The flash a silver motions
caught in the glove ascended*

Notice windings spoken

given nod

to being caught

*conducted in a curl that is snow's
final sail*

(dedicated to some astronomer)

Brian Lucas

Nomad: spiral

Hunting

clockwise amulet of faces

the transit body

peels off

one vagrant at a time

washed down the escalator

in a criminal light

bathing the parapet

like an arrest warrant;

this sun knows how a launch

flares into open workfare

exquisitely retailed

around a foaming fountain

at the thoracic level

the casual crowd

will please exit

for maximum transact: Women

and snakeskin first, grazing

children dematerialize

as property sanctions

return to the house on the hill

its right of mobility

buckled-in

to the jeep placebo;

(peephole outside)

*On the desert plain
munitions are kept busy
breathing the secret prayers of Islam
near an oasis at El Obeid;
this Sudan is the last best place
the bloated belly of the world
stays hid,
the eyes blacked, the vision
vague, immaterial,
sunken, heavy with a fatwa:*

“Attention shoppers; Clicking heels
and sapping wallets
have been calculated to the 669th
decimal place
to no prophylactic avail”

[*And children in a ring holding hands
laughing in rags
around an ancient well*]

Down into the courtyard
slip the lizard shoes and bags,
sniffing for a reduced sentence
in the hermetic limbo
between aisles
there is a weight taken on
and with it go benefactions—
“*before the need, before want,*
the goods”,
and the rest is a blur
on the shade over the side window
driving out of Valet:
a silhouette with dagger teeth—

the ticket taker's
gurgling, swarthy curse,
a leap ——— !

*The crescent moon is a sickle
sweeping the sands
at midnight
the coast is clear
for the left arm
wrapped in black cloth
to rewind
each dawn's parable—
the cobra
slain at the watering hole*

Catalogue, p.99—SAFARI!

John Noto

Hung

Profitability machines the wellspring
my song has spiraled;
accordingly saddled, the future stretched beyond
its ability to mean softly;

Forget exiles, I'm talking orphans, disheveled,
wandering the corrugated spillways in their rags;
the average life-span's housed in a weight room
equipped with legal drugs, off-track betting and
a visit-counter;

They've got you where they want you—an upscale cellar
with Santo & Johnny playing, “teardrop”;
heart pumping like a berserk cash-machine, my current I.D.
trembles through hands casting black birds
on the sound-room wall;

This bird can sing in the window of any tilting hi-rise,
not perched, but embedded *on* the pane, in chalky colors,
permanently;
a face in each glass indelibly sums the glint,
the street scripture, the pores' lost armors & beads;

. . .

Clapboard children, neighborhood as hung frame,
family misfiring,

these are livid, routed memories, successive mantels
raining advertised specials deep as kettle drums;
this summer will be 42 resisted arrests
from the day my ticket was fixed;

The world is a mart conveniently located
by the roadside near your next crap shoot;
sprint to the “ON” ramp, rear up,
whinny, chomp at the bit.

John Noto



Zeck

Stories by Richard Anders

Translated by Andrew Joron

Browsing through *Duden* [a German lexicon], I stumble upon the word “Zeck.” First meaning: “In provincial speech, a children’s game of tag.” I turn to the 1930 edition of *Meyer’s Conversational Lexicon*. “Zeck: a game of running, in which one player pursues the others and attempts to ‘knock off’ (that is, to catch) one of them, who in turn becomes the pursuer.” I go back to the *Duden* and look up the second meaning of the word. “Zeck: In South German and Austrian dialect, an arachnid.” I turn once more to *Meyer’s Conversational Lexicon*. “Zeck: Ixodidae, of the family of mites; an insect with a flat body and a proboscis used for sucking. The full-grown insect has eight legs and, in the tropics, can grow up to two-and-one-half centimeters in length. It feeds upon the blood of mammals, birds, and reptiles by fastening itself to the skin; in doing so, even the smallest varieties swell up from hardly two millimeters in length to the size of a bean.”

In my mind “Zeck” becomes a person; I form the word after my own image. Zeck acts out stories in my head, pursues thoughts, plays around with them, tries to take them apart, is pressed flat, extracts my blood. I imagine fashioning sentences with “Zeck” as subject and predicate; I write them down; now Zeck is born. And if I were Zeck, I would be rid of myself, I would be outside of myself, finally.

While washing up one morning, Zeck discovered that his face consisted of an amorphous mass that could be molded at will. He indulged himself in this game until he no longer knew who he was. Then he retrieved his passport picture from the bureau and shaped his nose, lips, cheeks, forehead, and ears after its image, until he once more recognized himself in the mirror. This encouraged Zeck, on the following morning, to transform himself into a different person all over again. To this end, he did not rely on his own imagination, but chose visages from newspapers and magazines to serve as models. All went well until, one day, he put on the face of a wanted murderer—just because he liked the moustache and the large melancholy eyes. Before noon on the same day, Zeck was identified and arrested. At the jail he immediately demanded the return of his confiscated passport. He was refused on the grounds that, as the I.D. photo did

not resemble him, he could only have stolen it from someone else. Zeck had to spend the night with the face of a murderer. The next morning he realized that he needed a mask with which to conceal himself from his accusers. After some hesitation, he opted for the truth: in the absence of a mirror, he shaped his face as flat as the wall at which he was staring; he fitted his mouth and eyes with bars and got rid of his nose entirely. Zeck awaited the jailer who, even if he held a key to the cell to which Zeck had become fully assimilated, would find no one inside.

Zeck on the mechanism of his organism: I was trapped inside an egg. A key grew out of my body. I inserted this key into the lock on the door of the egg. As I stepped through the door that led out of the egg, I noticed that the egg was enclosed by another egg that, likewise, had a door through which one could step. But my key was too small to fit the lock on the door of the larger egg; moreover, my little key had withered into a grayish appendix-shaped worm. So I sliced it from my abdomen, using my index and middle fingers as a pair of scissors, whereupon a new and larger key was immediately extruded. After opening the door of the larger egg with this key, I saw that I had entered a still larger egg. The second key, after the completion of its task, also withered into a gray worm and, through the action of my scissor-sharp fingers, suffered the same fate as its predecessor. It was replaced, by the regenerative powers of my body, with a new and still larger key that fit the lock of the larger egg. Thus I proceeded, opening with ever-larger keys the ever-larger locks of ever-larger eggs, while my full-grown body remained the same size, so that it was becoming difficult to keep my balance. At the door of the twelfth egg, my key had become as large and heavy as my body. Here, I noticed for the first time that the key also corresponded to my body in other respects: it possessed a nose, mouth, ears, eyes, and even a beard. The key now stood upright; at the same instant, my body tipped into a horizontal position. The key looked down at me and opened its mouth to speak. I heard its voice—my voice—saying “Now you are the key!” And as my eyes were suffused with grayness and my ears were stopped up with slime, I turned inside the twelfth lock.

An earthquake. Zeck, who just then found himself outdoors, leapt into the open window of a collapsing building. Once over the window sill, he realized his mistake and, in the nick of time, stopped time in its tracks. He had fallen there into the arms of a young woman who had leapt at the very same instant—but from the opposite direction. Zeck wanted to look at her face, yet because time had stopped, he was completely frozen and could not turn his head. Nor could he recognize that he hung as a framed picture on a wall, a picture that someone else was viewing. Zeck could not know that the fantasies of the viewer were slowly filling out his flat body as it lay in the arms of a flat woman, until time was set in motion once again and he began to fall along with the woman, along with the debris of the building. But the viewer caught the falling picture in the nick of time and hammered a new nail into the wall. A nail that would hold until the next millennium.

Zeck woke up inside his head. He got up and groped around, moving forward through the darkness of his skull, from which the brain somehow had been subtracted. He knelt down behind his face and took a look through his own eyes. He saw himself in the mirror, his features mirror-reversed. He saw that his mouth was opening and pressed his ear against the wall underneath the temple in order to hear himself. He heard nothing and was silent. He retreated into the interior of his head, trying to find a way out. He failed to find an exit and, exhausted, laid down on his back inside his skull. After a while, the conditions inside his head began to dream. In the pale dream-light spreading throughout the interior of his head, Zeck saw that the entire room was situated inside his head. Through the open windows and doors of the room, Zeck saw that the city was also located inside his head, and the sky over the city, and the universe itself, which he recognized from its depiction in an atlas. Zeck ascended into the sky and recollected—that is, internalized—its blueness. He was beside and beyond himself. The sun blinded him. After gathering his wits again, he realized that, by the shadow he cast upon the sea, he possessed wings. Upon a hill, he also glimpsed a plowman in a red shirt, and out in the bay, the ballooning mainsail of a small fishing boat. Seconds now elapsed as slowly as years. As soon as he plunged into the water, with only his legs struggling in the painted air, eternity began for him in the Royal Museum of Brussels.

Situacion de la rabia en el area fronteriza

Of a total of 2,103 animal brains examined, 108 were positive. Among the 108 positive brains, 51 were raccoons, 36 bats, and 21 other animals. Under the heading of other animals, the State of Arizona reported one cattle, one equine and one canine brain. Under the same heading, the Health Unit at El Paso County in Texas, reported 14 cases without specifying the animal species.

Mexican side

Of a total of 482 specimens sent for tissue examination, 102 were positive. Of these positive specimens, 93 were dog brains, 4 were cat brains, and 5 belonged to other species. Under the title other species, there was one case in a bat reported by Mexicali, B.C.N. and 4 cases reported by Piedras Negras, Coah., in the latter report, only one case which occurred in bovine was specified.

Comentarios

In regard to preventative measures and control, only partial information is available from the American side. In 1985, in 12 border localities on the Mexican side, a total of 171,094 canine rabies vaccines were applied, and 10,611 street dogs were eliminated. Both figures are slightly lower than those for 1984, during which 171,573 vaccines were applied and 11,733 dogs were eliminated.

Amendes Brown



"JOCK" AND "TEUFEL" AT RHEINGOLD

The canon of name and space

birds are a rabble
and the man and the woman, subterfuges
salvos of purulent time sag under their own weight
chilled portals of distance

are the seduction of peculiar investigators
the inspectors of flavored meat
catechists who memorize simple equations
tracing them on the sole of the foot with a quill

those who meter software by undoing the laces of its prey
all the clerks and astronauts and nuncios
who implement their pre-existing conditions
with ogdads of sustained magnetism

but YOU predicate sudden death
on a crucifix made of packing crate plywood and genuflect
that axioms undone are enough of excruciating longing
to neglect the first principle [frenzy] and the first impulse [frenzy]

as if *littoral* were the manner in which
pulses of your employment were turned back to *blear*
and that lacunae no longer ever happened

what the eye stands in shadow of
the throat reflects, lips project and utter

where the flow of the organism forward is impeded
syllable is the unhinderer

what space hinges at the cusp of the canonical act
name takes for itself

entered upon a discipline to appear by snow light

Lee Ballentine

For the use of betrayal

everything starts again on wednesday

there is a red plane and a blue plane of the body
that are certain of recording more than pleasure

sound that's forgotten all its art and gone intravenous
looks inviting when it spends the night here

at times the house and the train look inviting
at times they share inflammation of the lungs

there is a hole in the red plane for the use of betrayal
here is a theory of any length

a flood sums the coefficients over a large range of terms
a tornado allows the integral to be stepped

disaster is a kind of proof
of its own its nature is cyanosis

should you wish to
your purpose is opaque and spellbound

go take a look at nothing

Lee Ballentine



The conversion of blaise pascal a baroque novel an excerpt

D.M. Ludwin

Fragment 65

A man is a substance, but if you dissect him, what is he? Head, heart, stomach, veins, each vein, each bit of vein, blood, each humor of blood.

“Un homme est un suppôt, mais si on l’anatomise que sera-ce? la tête, le coeur, l’estomac, les veines, chaque veine, chaque portion de veine, le sang, chaque humeur de sang.”

The Autopsy of Blaise Pascal; Or, How the Surgeons Were So Anxious to Study the Dead Philosopher’s Anatomy That They Cut Open His Body Before It Was Even Cold; And, of What They Found Inside

After debating behind closed doors for three days, the surgeons, who were, to be sure, among the seventeenth century’s most brilliant medical minds, concluded unanimously that the cause of death was unusual: Pascal’s brains were too big for his head. They had never before seen anything like it. It is true that throughout Pascal’s life, his intellectual pursuits only aggravated what was from birth an already fragile constitution, but who would have suspected this? It seemed that his every thought, insight, and intuition brought him closer to death—a high price to pay for genius.

The surgeons immediately published their report and distributed it internationally, which meant that Pascal was quite literally laid bare, vital organs and all, to all the probing eyes of Europe. The report inventoried the contents of his body, from head to toe, pausing in particular on organs that showed signs of disease. They found, for example, that his stomach and liver were all dried-out like stale prunes; his intestines were entirely gangrenous, though they could not judge if that was the cause of the colic that tormented him or the effect.

Of course, what interested most people was the account of what the surgeons saw when they opened his head. They made two incisions lengthwise over the skull towards the mid-line of the nose; then, they peeled back the pericranium sheath to expose the skull. With the elaborate

bone in view, they noticed how the frontal suture had never fully sealed. Apparently, a callus, which you could feel if you were to run your finger along this cranial fissure, developed there over the years to protect the organ. Next, they cut away the bone between the two sutures with an osteoclastic instrument to find the dura mater pressing down upon the brain. Beneath the skull, they observed a prodigious abundance of brain, the substance of which was so solid and condensed that the surgeons concluded that it had caused the abnormal frontal suture. Probing deeper still, next to the ventricles, they found two impressions, like thumb imprints in wax, each filled with clotted blood that had started to gangrene. Then came the moment that they inserted a smooth, copper cylindrical instrument to withdraw the pineal body.

The text abruptly breaks off there and we encounter a gap even wider than the one in Pascal's skull. Is this because the manuscript came down to us incomplete, or, did the surgeons themselves fall silent in face of some unspeakable mystery? Unfortunately, we can never know with certainty what happened when the pineal body came into view. Perhaps they held it up to the sunlight to study its spongy flesh; or, peering inside the cavity, they might have located a substance harder than a date-stone. Some believed that the pineal body was the locus of the unbearable headaches that afflicted Pascal during his whole life. And others, by far the minority, have speculated that this thing, this unspeakable blank, this amorphous mass of tissue—no more than a network of highly specialized nerves, really—was that secret place where the spark of life burns so that the surgeons caught a glimpse of Pascal's soul before it had time to flee the body. Well, on this matter, instruct yourself as you will, for it appears that we have surpassed the bounds of anatomy. Did the surgeons sharpen their scalpels and cut deeper in search of that invisible place where they say the soul dwells? Is it in the brain, in the fine bulbous gland, as some had claimed, or shall we side with the theologians who say that it is in the heart and shines through the eyes like fire when strong emotions stir?

So, let the surgeons dissect the gland, the heart and the eyes to probe the veins, the capillaries, the blood, the tiny cells; and then, let them put the cells under a microscope so that they may enter the membranes and plasma to see an infinitely small universe even in there. But this division goes on to infinity so that they cannot enter the blank, silent space no matter what instrument they wield. Yet, did they not take a sadistic pleasure in watching the first incision being made? Did they not lean in to see so close that their breath moistened the corpse's cheek?

A Visit to the Tomb Where the Dead Philosopher, Contrary to Expectations, Has Not Been Able to Rest in Eternal Peace

They placed Pascal's body in his parish church, Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, where it promptly began to rot. They honored him by placing his tomb behind the prominent main altar of the Chapel of the Virgin. But it wasn't until the decomposition was thoroughly underway that his only surviving sibling, Gilberte, and her husband Florin finally got around to commemorating the deceased—they decided to have an epitaph tastefully inscribed on a black marble plaque. Pascal's family had not acknowledged the tomb for almost two years. Ostensibly, the reason for the delay was that Gilberte herself was on her deathbed and, since she ardently desired to be entombed with her brother, she was planning on having one epitaph inscribed for the two of them. However, it seems that Florin, whose mediocre accomplishments were always overshadowed by those of his brother-in-law, secretly wanted Pascal to be forgotten. As if that weren't enough, his wife's strange request to rest eternally with her brother instead of her own husband humiliated him beyond words.

Indeed, Florin was not the only jealous rival. The very sight of the epitaph enraged Pascal's many adversaries, who, for the most part, were Jesuits and scientists. One mathematician in particular had harbored such animosity towards Pascal that the only way that he could think to unburden himself of the infectious hatred that was slowly consuming his being was to sneak into the church one night and deface the marble plaque: he climbed right on top of the tomb and chipped away at the epitaph with bloodied fingernails until the words disappeared. His rage dated back to a competition that Pascal had sponsored a few years before his death, challenging European mathematicians to solve the remaining problems relating to a curve known as the cycloid. Well, when this particular mathematician, whose name we shall not name because he has suffered enough, submitted his results, Pascal tore it to shreds and later publicly mocked what he saw as the simple-minded calculations of a child. In intellectual forums, it was no secret that Pascal was merciless, and his arrogance in these matters earned him many formidable enemies.

Years later, Pascal's family had yet another epitaph inscribed on the same slab of marble. In no time at all, it was vandalized again, this time by a Jesuit priest who had been targeted in one of Pascal's polemical writings. When he was unable to persuade the local archbishop that Pascal was a heretic and that therefore his corpse should be expelled from God's house, he rallied together a group of Jesuits who had also been

slighted—there was no great shortage of them—and they stormed Saint-Etienne to vindicate God’s law as they saw it. They did not waste their time actually defacing the marble; instead, they simply hauled it off and, after making the sign of the cross, dumped it into the river Seine.

Pascal’s relatives made one last attempt. They inscribed the epitaph on a plaque with the Latin *faeliciter* misspelled. Despite the grotesque error, they hung it high up from one of the pillars in the chapel, well out of the reach of vandals. But the deceased’s misfortune continued. At that time, a new pastor with a grudge against Pascal was assigned to the church and the first thing he did was to move the tomb from its place in the spotlight behind the main altar to the apse, then to the occidental wall of the nave, then near the doors of the church, then to a little cloister, and finally, and with great satisfaction, to a musty, unlit corner under an arch where the horrific face of a gargoyle stared at it day and night. Soon, people forgot that the tomb was there. We can only speculate on the pastor’s motives, but some believe that he was a distant relative of Charlotte de Roannez, who suffered an ill-fated conversion in the hands of Pascal.

There the body rested for over two hundred years until a scholar who was conducting research at the Bibliothèque Nationale discovered a poorly-conserved letter belonging to the Pascal estate. It was dated just before the philosopher’s death and mentioned his wish to take some papers to the tomb with him. Based on this letter, the scholar hypothesized that Pascal’s corpse was hoarding all of the writings originally thought to be lost or destroyed, among them such precious documents as personal letters to his sisters and close friends, unpublished scientific works, and most importantly, an introduction disclosing the intended structure of his incomplete fragments.

Soon researchers from around the world came to Saint-Etienne to see if it was true. After all, the recovery of the lost papers would solve many, if not all, of the mysteries of the philosopher’s fragmentary thoughts. Indeed, it would mark an important turning point in scholarship on Pascal. Despite the researchers’ eloquent arguments, which quickly degenerated into outright begging, the church’s abbot refused to allow them to open the tomb or to violate the corpse in any way. This was not due to any particular affinity he felt for Pascal, but rather the commonsense belief that one should never exhume a body under any circumstance; or, simply put: let a dead body rest. When individual efforts proved unsuccessful, a community of university fellows quickly organized their efforts, calling themselves *The Society of Scholars Supporting the Exhumation of Blaise Pascal*, or at least that’s what appeared on official letterhead.

The abbot resisted as long as he could; it wasn't until the French Minister of Culture intervened that he gave in, and even then, only on the condition that a mass for the dead be held. When the eventful day came, the church was teeming with scholars anxious to test their hypothesis. The only other privileged guests were a scrawny, three-legged dog who urinated in the aisle and a homeless woman with no teeth who permeated an unpatented perfume throughout the church. At the end of the ceremony, the abbot blessed himself and waved incense around Pascal's tomb, which in addition to completing the ritual, covered up the stench coming from the back row. The scholars assembled around the tomb and held their breath as a few of them lifted the heavy stone lid. As they peered inside, they did not find the decomposed philosopher clutching his manuscripts in an amorous embrace. In fact, they did not find Pascal at all: the tomb was empty. The corpse had disappeared without a trace—no bones, no ashes, and certainly no papers. No one knew what had happened to the body. The scholars just stared at each other, dumfounded. The only sound that broke the silence was the hysterical laughing of the woman with no teeth as she scuffled out of the church with the three-legged dog limping behind her. It seemed that the two had come together

Fragment 100

It is Not in Our Power to Control the Heart

“Il n'est pas en notre pouvoir de régler le coeur.”

How Pascal's Ten-Year-Old Niece, Marguerite Périer, Puts the Holy Thorn on Her Grossly Infected Eye and Is Miraculously Cured Without Even Knowing It

and when they light the candles it's time to line up. the youngest go first to the front of the line. you don't have to be the shortest only the youngest so even though i'm taller i go towards the front. i'm not the first. i think there are some littler than me and younger too. louise is older than me only by a few months. she stands right behind me or sometimes we walk in two lines then she stands next to me but not today. before we light the candles agnès says **Close your eyes** not just me everybody and you're supposed to fold your hands too and hold them in front of you so when

she starts praying you're ready. every time we go into the chapel she says that prayer out loud please god help the girls pay attention in your house. we line up all the time but we don't light candles all the time. today's special and agnès and flavie and elisabeth and anne-marie and catherine and lucie and dorothée who's funny her cheeks are always so red and even angélique are joyful and they are waiting at the front of the line right near me not too far. i don't know what they're waiting for. i see the others already in the chapel. they're waiting too and they put a special cloth over the altar like easter. it's not easter yet. it can't be easter because i still can't eat anything during the day. just water we get to drink. i don't mind. at first it was hard and i felt my stomach all the time now i'm not even hungry. the tiny girls get to eat otherwise they cry all the time and they can't even wake up. we get to eat when it's dark outside. you're not supposed to eat too much even under such special and holy circumstances. eat what you normally eat. you shouldn't be a glutton just because you know in the morning you can't have any bread or fruit. i like the fruit best especially the apricots and the berries not now of course it's too early in the season. we only have jam. i saw geneviève take some bread and she poked her finger right in the tub of butter she didn't see me see her. she ate the bread and put her finger right in her mouth and she took another piece of bread. she didn't eat that one instead she rolled it up in her dress and ran out of the kitchen real fast. i followed her down the hall and she ran outside and sat behind the barn and she was eating so fast her cheeks were so fat like a squirrel her dress was all crumbly with white and brown crummy crumbs. i don't know how she chewed that stuff up and i saw there that she had some cheese too then she looked up **Please don't tell Please Please** i wasn't going to tell. she was really scared she wanted to give me some cheese. no i wasn't hungry. anyway i won't tell but they will know because angélique says that if you break the fast horns grow from your head. i don't want any horns. besides i'm not hungry. i don't know how you get horns. if you get god mad he can do what he wants to you. i keep looking at her. she's way behind me on line. i don't see horns yet. they must take some time to grow maybe two or three days or even a week. now she gets nervous when she sees me. she thinks i'm going to tell **Hold up your candle** i hold it up so they light it. i know the wind is just going to blow it out. you can't hold a candle out here with this wind blowing. see look **Cup it with one hand** she keeps looking at me. i can't help it. it's the wind. i do too cup it but it blows right under my hand **Hold it like the other girls** i am. i'm holding it like them. i think there's more wind up front than in the middle because you have less bodies

around you. we will not go in until all the candles are lit. they light mine so many times they think i'm doing it on purpose like i take my fingers and squeeze out that flame **The light means God's love** we start to walk single file. i try to walk slow and steady. i'm afraid to move the candle. i am cupping my hand. it's not my fault that it blows out right at the door. we can't stop the line now. angélique looks mad at me. her eyes are black beads. i didn't do it on purpose. there are so many people in the chapel tonight. it's not easter. i know it can't be easter. look at that altar it's all white and there are three candles on it with a gold piece in the center. the sisters are standing around it on both sides. you've got to kneel down when you get up there and you kiss the gold. you have got to pay attention at the front of the line. everybody's watching you and my candle has gone out. it's too late. they already see it. everybody sees it. everybody's looking at me. i keep my eyes down. i know they're looking. it was the wind not me. oh please all i want to do is run from there. she kneels and kisses it. now it's my turn. i'm supposed to kneel down then i kiss that gold. kneel and kiss. kiss after you stand up **Put it on your eye, child** i put it on my eye and it burned so bad. i forgot my eye was tearing. i put it on my eye. i forgot the pus came down my cheek onto my dress. it dripped right down. see the candle is out. next you stand back up and go sit down in the same order. they're still looking at me. i forgot to kiss it. i don't know will i get horns like geneviève. i find her on line she's still waiting to go up to the altar. she doesn't have horns yet. she's afraid of me and so is lucie and i didn't even see lucie eat cheese or bread. she's as old as geneviève but she gets to stand behind her. i think the older girls should go first so we can watch them. you have got to pay attention in the front. you see i forgot to kiss the gold. the older girls all did it and they all put their candles around the altar. not me i'm still cupping it in my hand. after they sang something. i can't understand latin. why do they sing in latin when the tiny girls don't even get lessons? it's too soon and you can't learn it just like that. louise just started lessons. anyway she stands right behind me so i'm next. when we go back to our rooms i remember that there was pus and now there's no pus. my nightdress is cool and clean and my eye is not burning. it was and then it was not burning. i can't see it. there's no mirror in my room but when i touch my eye nothing comes out. nothing leaks out to press on it because before it was like i was crying but i was not crying. besides it was just one eye and you cannot cry from only one eye. i've never seen such a thing not even the girl-with-the-long-hair who cries all the time especially at night. it was and then it was not. suddenly it was not. i touched my eye and it did not burn. it doesn't even hurt

to swallow **Why aren't you in bed** flavie yelled out **O merciful God above** i looked up above but there was nothing there to see. sometimes invisible things are there you cannot see them with your own eyes. you are too human to see that. you can see only visible things and some things do not want you to see them so they become see-through and blank. you can hear them sometimes fluttering by the window especially if you leave it open. the light attracts them. they are not mosquitoes. mosquitoes don't care if you see them. flavie was hugging me. she squeezed me hard in her arms. i could hardly breathe. you're not supposed to touch each other. then the others came in my room. it was so crowded and they all started talking and raising their hands and voices then everybody was touching me even geneviève. she put just the tip of her finger on my shoulder like she was touching fire. she was real careful to jump back fast just in case. i am not fire. i am not a burning ember. i am not a flame. i am not a candle. a candle wick a flickering wick windy wick flickering fluttering flame. i am not. i do not smolder or smoke or rise up in the air. i do not burn **Let me see** they were all pushing in closer grabbing me pulling on my nightdress touching my hair screeching shouting. agnès angélique were yelling **Quiet Quiet Quiet Girls Quiet Down** monsieur singlin came in. he's going to see us in our nightdresses. he's going to see my feet. i took off my shoes. you don't wear your shoes in bed. you take them off when you go to your room. he's not supposed to come to your room so late. i can pull down my nightdress and step on it with my toes so it stays down. he can't see it like that. look he has monsieur with him who has a black case with him that's got shiny things in it. he pokes me with a cold metal thing in my mouth my nose my throat my cheek. he squeezes my cheek with two fingers like a pincher. it's not as cold as the shine. look at that black case. it opens wide and closes. look at that black mouth go open and close going to swallow you up if it can going to poke and pinch. then it just stops.

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