

# YOUR MOUTH IS EVERYWHERE

**Nick Twemlow**

**Racquetball Chapbook Tournament**

a Friend of the World Press/Bathroom Reading Materials joint

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That was the last sentence fragment of this stanza.  
Don't make copies of this book to sell them.

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a Bathroom Reading Materials/Friend of the World Press joint.  
Get more info at: <http://racquetballchapbooktournament.wordpress.com>

Wouldn't it be neat if people thought this was a poem?  
Because it kind of looks like one.

**for Robyn & Sacha**

## Mouth Breather

This town drips  
its sewage right into  
your mouth. Tea cools  
on the table, frogs  
miasmatic with the wind.  
I am in awe of the poet  
in awe / giddy  
at the world /  
famously in love with every-  
thing! Syllabic  
love, meretricious love,  
illicit, disturbed, mendacious  
love! O to be one  
with the tenacious  
among us. Awe replaces  
guilt, guilt  
replicates pumping gas  
at the Kum & Go while  
one's cat boils in the heat  
in the backseat. Bed  
down in this community  
of rucksacks and antediluvian  
daydreams, the porch  
in need of a good sweep,  
the books remain un-  
published, the gods  
fuck every open hole.  
Call me Animal, call me  
anytime you're  
sizing up the chandelier  
for a noose. Your bourbon's  
warmed to a nosebleed.  
The bank teller hydraulics  
your life's work, returns  
slips of paper dot-matrixed  
with your symbolic life  
teeming like bedsores  
you later turn over to  
scribble a few words  
the radio voice whispered

into commercial:  
*black helicopters over*  
*America, more after*  
*the break.* Motel parking lot  
ripples in the heat;  
it's the tar baking,  
and in Room 26 your  
future spreads its legs  
on the edge of the mattress,  
*fidelity* just a word  
I flipped past on the way  
to *fuck me*. Dust spits up  
and screams its name,  
a child's name, the diabolic  
intensity revealed  
dusting the art on the walls  
of our new home.

Nobody to read  
these

missives. I write as if  
there's audience  
in arrears, flowing  
from the back channels  
beyond media,  
tapping a spring  
called The Source. Pe-  
trarch sold his proclivity  
for the prehensile  
in this spot. Tourists  
sip their espressos,  
I wand forth a waiter  
with a paltry croque-  
monsieur, my wife  
crabs a glass of hot water,  
all the world sifting  
through me, this  
fucking error in the  
transcript long since  
yellowed into fact.

## The Verbatim

Such as knee-deep in snow  
fingering sinew of dead sparrow  
contemplating headlong  
into street before street  
plow, it is machine.

I am machine, machinations  
swerve into tilde, extra special  
sauce spills onto burger  
called, Today is the day  
that the rest of your life

suctions, capiche?  
Only piano, only glass.  
Please tell me the curb  
screams my name  
because my name,  
everywhere. I God  
the snow, plankton  
the bookie's nightmares.  
Jesus Christ, the brown mess  
of snow shrouding my sidewalk

reminds me of the man  
tucked inside, the man  
jack-hammering every tinsel  
thought as if  
backlash has backlash.  
You will see through into the thingness  
of things, such as blood in a leaf  
that has no tree, the chasm between us

as it thickens into a callous.

## West of Vicodin

Narcotic sunshine  
combines veil w/  
tumor-sized  
hail, thus the  
rumors  
crash into symptoms,

the codes counterfeit  
tokens of appreciation.

You'll spend everything  
you've spent everything  
you're going to spend

like medicated breakfast,  
you're going to spend  
—all those years pissed away—  
each sunrise barking  
at the moon,  
which

specter.

~

creamy adrenaline  
salve for the valve  
bursting like spring tulips  
dozens of them  
erupting

code unknown today  
lilac instability  
all these flowers became  
angry when you participated

participate in zombie myth  
hyper aware hyper  
articulate hyper  
hyphy thizz relics

into nocturnal emissions  
of freeway of death  
at the end of which there  
is no end  
of which despair flowers  
into a morose cadence  
in which sepals splay

~

how long has she  
terrified night  
this way  
that  
way out comma  
stain of sky  
codex for Rolodex

~

One's therapist  
incidentally  
should never leave  
the blinds open to the only  
window in his office  
when his office is on the ground floor  
next to a well-  
trafficked  
sidewalk.

## A humid hole, which is breathing

The pain started here. It resembled  
Nothing I had. My arm tethered  
To a balloon. A humid hole,  
Which is breathing, which said  
God is dead. Halitosis. God is me  
On acid, whittling my thumb  
Into a coin, which I may forever  
Insert into vending machines.  
This is righteous, spoke the native.  
Bespoke native, pelt sac, Tā moko,  
Centuries of unmediated anger  
Unleashed on the body. Register  
Rings up tonal shifts, expensive ones.  
Mother loved me most flaccid.  
Gangrene nightmare, the folly  
Of nudism. Every hole opens  
To sing a song about the starlings  
Diving into the hole opening  
Between your eyes. God is thanked  
For making this dunk possible.  
For me, God drinks milk,  
Milks all the possibilities  
On the table. A corporate God,  
Bespoke suit, vellum skin,  
Precisely enunciated vowels.  
End-stopped bowels.  
Every slick sentence milked  
& bilked, sliced & diced.  
Every humid hole  
Breathes in at once, an example  
Of mass hypnosis. I don't mean  
To be so arch. I just don't know  
How to be otherwise. The hive,  
The hole, the corruption. I press  
A pimple on my nose. Liquefied  
Sunrise washes the strychnine  
From my system. Hollandaise?  
Absolutely. I have my father's  
Heart, a love of orphaned creatures  
Aflame in alleyways, and his ability

To rage indifferent to alliances.  
What I mean is, I will destroy  
Your hyoid bone the moment  
You light the match you throw  
Onto the dog you've soaked  
In kerosene, consequences be damned.  
That's a politics, an ethos, a dirge.  
We love rain-soaked puppies.

## Modernism

The Kansas River runs like  
a vaginal slit through Topeka.  
Catfish the size of Krakens.  
I keep the radio close to my ear  
steeped in heuristics,  
as dawn begets a bloodied fawn  
a crosshair settles down  
on it in the downy

field.

I cannot keep her image before me.

## Imagism

In the depths of the aerosol can  
I see the numbers flash  
from the console,  
and the pilot throws down  
some f-bombs, numbing  
the industrial revolution,  
took names, made a list,  
went public. I saw my neighbor  
through the curtain  
doing something highly unlikely.  
So I picked up the phone.

## Agony & X

—for ALC

I have no right to engage this so I engage this. The chakras fly apart. My whole inner self turns from the mirror reveals agony. I am so just kidding. I'm naked in the bathtub soaking in Old Milwaukee. I am listening to planets collide. I am in bed with her. It is quiet. You are still alive somewhere out there. I am now begging her to kiss me I am weeping. I am listening to planets collide. I am jacked into the moment she relents her lips are possibly quivering but she kisses me. You are a freeze frame. I am frying in a bathtub of toasters. I am picturing you getting out of the car and running after the bus vaguely aware of me laughing. I am listening and I hear you wheezing. I am staring at clown drawings tacked up on your wall. You are never going to wake up from something unlike a dream unlike a vision. Planets collide. I am visiting you in order to absolve myself of my vague past. I break down on occasion when I think about what happened. The past is a wire hanger and a back alley and a problem. I am beginning to think everything happens in hotel rooms. I am in the downtown Holiday Inn and she is asleep and someone is at the door. You are barely able to move and sometimes you must feel like this is how it is. I am certain I have never known a silence as tender as that hotel room on this night. The person at the door was more than I could bear and he wouldn't say who it was or what happened. That person is knocking at every door you close behind you. The next place you go is heavenly or is shaped like a mouth. You are an archive of documents being scanned by you. I am certain that the sound of planets colliding isn't supposed to be this quiet. Let's just say it. You died that night and no one would tell you. This descent into the sentimental is what might save you. I am writing this to save you. My mistake was to ask you to read this. If we can dispense with psychological interpretations we will sleep better. I am happy you died. I am glad to have known you then but am much happier to know you now. You are reading this after a day of scanning old documents and as you drift into sleep, imagine waking up tomorrow for the first time then wake up tomorrow for the first time. Take notes in a notebook describe the light the people the expression on anyone's face. Leave the notebook somewhere you will find it and not recognize it and scan it and e-mail it to me. Your first entry will describe the grove of lemon trees where you are sitting writing to me about the first woman you were able to talk to about something that happened a long time ago. I'll leave this poem for you to transcribe.

## Closework

My anger controls the orange groves burning at the horizon.

The horizon, my endless question.

I was breaking down in tears emailing shelters to try and find someone  
to take her in today.

Please don't act like I'm stupid and waste time on stock replies.

I've heard it all

hinges on how stable your hands remain upon insertion.

Always talk as if the person you are speaking to is wearing a wire.

## With Delicate Hand

Never instead put the bales in the bounty,  
resize the type to provide ALLURE.  
Look how the picture seems to tell a story.

Mother, I'm all dolled up in HOPE.  
My breastplate hinge needs a little oil,  
I'm hobbling along to kick your crutch.

Mother, I'm all doped up with DESIRE.  
I've cleaned the machine with delicate  
hand, scrubbed the data within an inch of its life.

Mother, I'm all diary today, feeling PENSIVE.  
The returns keep disappearing, I can't get my hands  
around even one. I keep clicking through

the channels, the links, little vortex  
displays all the characteristics of a MOTIVE,  
mother, but someone's just reported

that the election has been made OFFICIAL.  
The results seem promising. In one version  
you get to keep the crown. The twin diamonds

sparkling your eyes sparkle harder, the LIGHT  
takes on a decadence like that of old snow.  
In the other, your garland consumes itself,

your hair falls out like nuclear, your elisions  
lisp the windows shut, breaking the view  
in half. Your face becomes but a VAGARY

and there are no backups in storage. I AM  
a cosmos if I am still breathing. Wind breaks  
at my neck and spells your name acrostically.

Spells your name like my BELOVED. Repetition  
of facts and figures keeps me apprised. Dogs  
mass in the streets, shaking bones, slurping scrap

lifted from the MALFEASANCE of silver plates  
hung to dry from row house clotheslines,  
the tread's worn down on the spires sagging

from the GLORIOUS peaks of this great sky!  
Can you hear the clicking through the air vents?  
Did you notice the picture twitch on the bedroom wall?

Leaves turn pink and blue, SUPERNATURAL  
is not dead, is rippling through me, I can feel  
my toes, I can see you staring at my nape,

I can see you vivid in the dark corner of the day,  
taking your damask gown off one strap  
at a time, as if I were watching. I have a MANDATE.

Nobody else would bother to see you this way.

## Glib Recitation

So I walk into the house Mies van der Rohe  
designed at gunpoint, the cocaine was tiresome  
by this point, but that was its attraction.  
I can take anything I want because I have been filmed  
fucking the richest heiress in the known world.  
I would like the word you keep locked  
in the safe behind the Richter in the guest bedroom.  
The word for the kind of ease that you recline  
into after a colonic and tonic.  
Give me supersonic. I want the gardener's  
daughter's virginity, the fall  
of Rome and the rise  
of a gangster nation. I fucked everything.  
I fucked the Cornish game hen.  
It was so lifeless I put a fork in its face.  
I am too young to remark on death.  
I hope it resembles the view  
you tear open  
with your toy sword, toy sword,  
say it ten times fast.

## My Life Was Novalis

Flapped in the interminable winds,  
see-sawed in the loop  
of playground. Novalis.  
Say it with me. Novalis.  
Rhymes with a specific kind of  
internal bleeding, when the ulcer  
intensifies, I pour my guts out.  
Please video this. Star me  
in your parable. My life was Novalis.  
Battered round the cape by winds  
interminable, Mont. Blanc  
a mere elegy, and yet when I type  
my life begins inside the astronaut  
sleeping inside my deepest secret.  
The lost pilot spins out of orbit,  
collapses the difference between  
a head cold and ahead, the cold  
stretches out forever, or almost,  
for at its end, Novalis.

## Commuter

My name is Finnegan's  
Wake, understandably. Here  
on the L, the L's light  
turns away, pathologically.  
Everything looks askance  
these days. Possibly otherworldly.  
I am no different, except  
that I recognize the contents  
of the mirror, I get it.  
The streams of light  
in exchange for the lightening  
of a burden. Exchanging  
the gangrenous testicle  
for a few cigarettes, a baroness  
spit-shining the cutlery.  
O to be forgotten  
for once, to encounter  
at the end of my commute  
the mirror emptied  
of its contents. A homeless  
man clean-shaven  
and well dressed and  
at least savvy enough  
to keep his problems  
to himself. I'm pretty sure  
that it's not me who smells  
like I shat myself.

## The Joy of Solipsism

Bring the oncoming train into focus.  
Tell me your theory of the market.  
Pupils dilate, trees fall,  
I practice transference in my downtime.  
Think of my mother watering  
plants. Is  
everybody really watching?  
Blog me. Add to my Wiki entry.  
Date me. Reply to my electronic flirt.  
My mother told me she'd nominate  
me for that award, if she could bear  
the proxy. Show me your tits.  
I shaved my balls. I took out  
a second mortgage. Motherhood  
frightens the elms, carves its sorry  
initials into the sky's prolapsed anus.  
Each sadness passes through  
me like a gallstone. My valve leaks  
an amniotic canopy over the  
bar I'm fragging. I'm a fragment,  
a tender button. I saw my first  
beetle in the periphery. Lake Shore  
Drive against the ruins, the stain  
of lake effect snow a special effect,  
the only weather  
exhibiting any real affect.

## Traffic Crash Report

You will learn the same techniques.  
I'm sorry about the redistricting  
of your left hemisphere. The comeback  
of the amygdala has been staved  
off by the arrival of a stray cat.  
Where else would you expect  
to find me in a shambles, but the  
corner where two station wagons  
meet in a perpetual collision?  
I'm blanking on your name.  
You don't need to train constantly.  
The attack will come as a surprise  
at your office, the pink slip  
a coupon for three nights at a reduced rate  
of speed, a recipe for lasagna the CEO's  
wife cobbled together, a bullet engraved  
with your initials. Though further  
inspection reveals your co-worker's  
former mailing address tattooed  
around your ankle. That was a terrific  
bender, last night. I never saw  
our son in just that way. There are twenty-four  
intense lessons, wherein you will  
learn the skills needed to recognize  
yourself in your wife's compact mirror,  
de-escalate potential energies, subdue  
a tennis racket, and eliminate a life-  
threatening attacker. There simply  
is not enough time in an hour, lest you  
think I'm joking try packing all your things  
in your cubicle into a brown corrugated box.  
You have learned the same  
techniques, but you seem to have mastered  
them much faster than I expected. I have no answer  
for why the light coming from the other room  
seems so brittle, like when I touch it  
and there is nothing in me that believes  
in the correlation between it shattering  
and my faltering interest in your stories  
about the sky falling, splitting open,

or the gate swings shut. The Aeolian harp  
blasts a tune sour with rotten fruit. I  
want to break the jeweler's window  
and place my eyes on display.

**Nick Twemlow** lives in Iowa City, where he studies film and is poetry editor of *The Iowa Review*. He also co-edits Canarium Books.

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