

YOUR MOUTH IS EVERYWHERE

Nick Twemlow

Racquetball Chapbook Tournament

a Friend of the World Press/Bathroom Reading Materials joint

Racine, WI • 2010

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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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The Racquetball Chapbook Tournament is
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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