

A man is walking by on his cell phone. He is black and he is speaking in French. "JE NE SAIS PAS," he bellows into the phone. But he isn't actually bellowing, and his words aren't actually in capital letters or in Charlemagne standard font (though Charlemagne would understand, being French). Maybe he isn't actually black. He is just passing through. If he takes a right, he will be confronted by the end of the world. But I lose interest. I do not watch long enough to know.

meditation on the chipped mosaic of a clay augur, in the form of a fountain  
alexandra ghaly

*What is going on is above all a  
transformation of a mental state.*

I remember cardboard lunches  
stacked by nameless advisors  
(perhaps the troll) against the wall  
as we devoured mayonnaise-  
covered ham and cheese  
sandwiches in the once-wild grove.  
The trash would later litter the  
space—there would be no hope of  
recycling. It was here that they  
tore down the greenhouse and  
made this place unwild. It is here  
that our gluttony now thrives. It is  
an insatiable lion roaming tarmac  
plains.

I no longer eat meat. I saw too  
many bovines and camels  
and lambs slaughtered  
on the sides of  
roads half  
a world  
away.

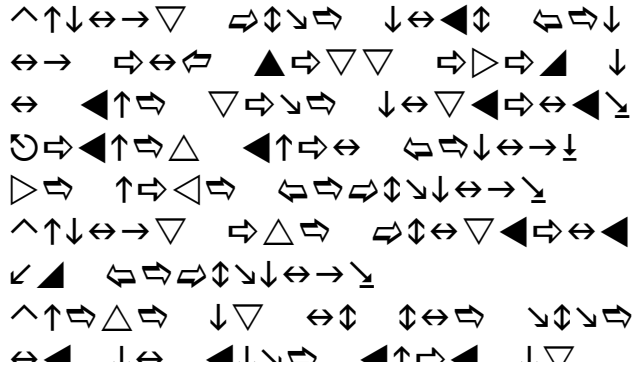
We could have given our cat  
a flea bath in this fountain.

The Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough  
Association was established in 1859 in the United Kingdom. They were  
charged with providing safe water for animals of all types, whether or not  
they possessed a clavicle or had not yet shed the freeness of neck allowing  
for brachiation.

You are the hill with the laughing  
face. Beneath you lies the bridge,  
and beneath the bridge lies the  
troll. The troll has built a house  
beneath the bridge and it is the  
chimney of this house that we see.  
Sitting on green metal benches  
oddly designed to match the trash  
cans (voilà the chicken and the  
egg scenario) we overlook it: or at  
least, some do. Others  
misperceive it. Some strange  
contraption for the fountain, we  
must think. It plunges from a  
puddle like Excalibur in reverse.  
We only see it now because  
instead of controlled geysers of  
water spewing forth there is this  
positively hideous pit. We have  
been told that this place was once  
wild. The surface tamed, it is only  
you who remain wild.

In the house with the chimney there is a fireplace. It isn't smoking right now because the mantle of the Earth has been keeping it pretty toasty thus far. Besides, the troll doesn't like to announce his presence with smoke signals unless there is the threat of worms. He keeps a box of matches next to his bed when he sleeps. The worms don't like matches because the worms don't like fire. Their five hearts make them

especially vulnerable to heat: the flame of love burns strong, after all. Last week a worm tried to break into his house at night. The troll immediately lit a match, and the worm began to thrive in a pleasure so sick and twisted that it exploded. No joke. Right then and there, in the throes



of orgasm after orgasm after orgasm, a five-hearted earthworm splattered into four thousand bits. Despite resorting to paint thinner and thin-bladed metal scrapers, the troll has been unable to fully remove the worm goo from the exterior of his house. It baked on, like cheese on a crusty quiche pan.

**WHEN I SIT HERE EVERYTHING FEELS ALL WRONG. MY HEAD IS FLUFFY, STUFFY, MUFFY. MAYBE EVEN MUZZY. THAT WAS HOW I FIRST LEARNED FRENCH. MY MOTHER MAY HAVE DISSOLVED MY COLLEGE FUND WHEN I WAS NINE YEARS OLD, BUT I KNEW SHE HAD HER HEART IN THE RIGHT PLACE WHEN SHE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF BILINGUALISM ON HER FIVE-YEAR OLD DAUGHTER. SO MUCH SO THAT SHE PURCHASED VHS TAPES.**

When you are working in terms of what is not happening, all you are doing is fiddling with transformations of delusion.

TOO MANY POTS // NOT ENOUGH PANS  
TOO MANY SHOES // NOT ENOUGH SOCKS  
TOO MANY HENS // BUT // NOT ENOUGH COCKS  
TOO MANY CRONES // AND // NOT ENOUGH BONES  
TOO MUCH FAT // IN ALL THE WRONG VATS  
TOO MANY GREEKS // NOT ENOUGH MEATS

Fountains were originally designed to be purely functional. Perhaps the remains of the first Mesopotamian fountains can still be found in Iraq, assuming that we haven't by now bombed them all to shit and

~~I wish that I could forget about this place. It is too close to the end of the world.~~

smithereens. It would be three thousand years before the first decorative fountains were introduced into Ancient Rome. Three thousand years: by then, surely, *homo sapiens*

would have driven all of the Neanderthals out of Europe. The creepy crawlies of the prehistoric world were rapidly being exterminated. The lotus-eaters and the sea monsters had no choice but to flee underground.

*Only by dealing with what is happening can you really change things for the better. Because if you aren't dealing with what's really going on, all you're changing are your ideas about what's going on. You can't change the situation itself.*

A man walks by and he says into his cell phone:  
"JE NE SAIS PAS."

YOU crawl into the pipe and up the chimney. But in fact YOU are really crawling down the chimney. YOU are somehow shrinking in order to accomplish this feat, although YOU will insist that the world around YOU is simply expanding. YOU are wrong. Infinity is reached through infinite division, not infinite multiplication. And there is no hope of escape.

The troll keeps two ovens in his kitchen. He "keeps" them because they are always trying to run away. He has to lash them to the counters and floors and sometimes he has to spank them to keep them from bucking. They claim that it is the natural gas that is getting their panties all up in a bunch, but this claim is straight farce. Ovens don't wear panties.

One oven is for baking things. It might be called convectional. The other oven stores bones.

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Things come into being and pass away in the same instant.

Rather than being, we have becoming.

Things are constantly becoming.

There is no one moment in time that is the same as any other moment in time.

Everything is in flux.

Everything is impermanent.

\* \* \*

YOU have already tired of the journey and forgotten why YOU began it in the first place when YOU reach the troll's home. He is not happy to see YOU. YOU do not know it, but the troll lives inside me. In fact, he *is* me. And YOU do not know it, but the troll hates YOU.

She is writing beside me now.

Her fingers may be colder than mine, but whether or not they are is wholly irrelevant, just like the lavishly described dog on the cemetery path. She is wearing a rust-colored coat. I will later sit next to a man wearing the very same coat. She will have given him the coat. We will be gorging ourselves at an All-You-Can-Eat Sunday morning Indian buffet. I will dip my seventh piece of *naan* into the *mutter paneer*. I will spill and potatoes and peas everywhere. And I mean everywhere.

She is playing word games. She is rearranging syllables as if that will help her unlock riddles.

But the secret is that there are no riddles. There is only fractal-bounded emptiness. We are creation caught in a continuous feedback loop. We do not exist: we are constantly coming into and out of being.

*Something does not simply come into being, hang around for a while, and then go out of being. You must not think of life in terms of being, but in terms of becoming.*

I stare at the motor and the motor is me. I am covered in rotting leaves. I am abandoned. I am so seasonally unfunctional that I am not even worthy of being properly stored. My blood is drained and I am refilled with antifreeze. These are the only precautions made. Heaven forbid that come spring, or summer if the budget cuts are severe, they find that I am beyond resuscitation. If this is the case, will you be there to blow life into my butterfly-clay head?

What is there on the flip side of this crust? Does it feel this empty? Is there pepperoni? If nothing else, it must at least be warmer, being closer to the mantle and all.

The troll wants to put YOU in the oven of bones, but it is bucking once again and causing a racket. Furthermore, he cannot decide how to dispose of YOU. He wants nothing more than for

She tells me that she is terrified of the end of the world.

an entourage of worms to swarm by so he can light them on fire. YOU, the innocent

bystander, will be caught in the crossfire. YOUR bones will never return to the surface. They will be simply *introuvable*.

*You must think of becoming as a fountain.*

*Water is being shot up and falling down simultaneously.*

*Things come into being and they pass out of being as it were simultaneously.*

*In order to really live, and to live creatively, we must live at the point of becoming: the very top of the fountain.*

*The more we can live at this point, the more we can direct and change our reality.*

*It is at this point that we are constantly being reborn.*

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*In the dream  
we are always strangers*

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The place is such that she cannot see anything else—no trees, no grass, no flowers or bees or other bipedal things. She just looks up and up. Not a single cloud dares smear such perfect blueness. She lies so perfectly, perfectly still that she feels as if her body is beginning to fall away. She slowly deconstructs the concept of time. Then the concept of space. Then the concept of mind. She loses herself. All that is and all that was and all that ever will be is blue.

She finds an isolated place and stays there.

I climb the hill and feel your heartbeat. I lie on the grass that is you and curl onto your stomach and listening to those noises in that darkness I tell you that I feel as if I have returned to the womb. With a sleeping finger I trace dozens and perhaps hundreds of the stretch marks running across your entire body. Some are thin, some thick, some raised, and some are barely visible. Some resemble scars, as if deep gouges have been rent on the surface above the mantle of your kidneys. You tell me that it took you six years to step seeing them and by extension yourself as hideous. I want to tell you that I love all of you and that includes all of your flaws; but I do not want to frighten you away from me and I am already drifting into the dreamland of the womb. I listen to your heart beat and beat and beat. These too soothing pulsations are finite, and every one of them expended brings you one heartbeat closer to death. You are my second womb and through you, I am being born again.