

do. In virtually all cases, but especially, if the eyes are sunken, if the weather is hot and dry, or if the body must be kept on display for an unusually long period of time or shipped, it is advisable to close the eyes with eye caps. The eye caps are made of a variety of sizes. Small perforations on the surface of the eye caps produce a rough surface which helps to keep the eyes from drying out. This is applicable to all other methods of eye closure, including the use of eye caps. Eye caps can be trimmed to size with scissors.

# OLEH KOLYADA'S PROJECT CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN POETRY

#1



Fig. 3809 — Filling the sunken eyeballs.

BRYAN LEWIS  
SAUNDERS

Close the eyes.  
Purpose: To produce the illusion of natural sleep and for cosmetic effect.

In those cases where the eyeball is completely sunken, the hypodermic injection of massage cream or tissue builder behind and directly into the eyeball will raise and inflate it to its normal contour. See Fig. 3809.

OLEH KOLIADA'S PROJECT

# CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN POETRY

#1

ПРОЕКТ ОЛЕГА КОЛЯДИ

# СУЧАСНА АМЕРИКАНСЬКА ПОЕЗІЯ

#1

BRYAN LEWIS  
SAUNDERS

БРАЙАН ЛУЇС  
СОНДЕРС

УДК 821.111(73)'06-1  
С91

*Рекомендовано до друку Вченою Радою  
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Копіювати книжку цілком або частинами без письмового  
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**Коляда О.В.**

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Брайан Луїс Сондерс — сучасний американський художник, поет та автопортретист, який заснував свій унікальний художній метод в середині 90-х років ХХ століття. Його мутаційна метапоезія формується через призму інтроспективних перетворень психіки під зміненими станами свідомості задля демонстрування епіфанічного знімку реальності — вкрай тривожного, парадоксального та вільного від традиційних обмежень. Перший випуск серії "Contemporary" представлений у формі інтерв'ю з митцем, що супроводжується різними міжкультурними поясненнями та аналізом його збірки віршів "Near Death Experience" (2010).

**УДК 821.111(73)'06-1**

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## FOREWORD

Bryan Lewis Saunders is a contemporary American artist, poet and daily-self-portraitist who established his unique and highly original artistic method in the mid 1990s. His mutation metapoetry is generated through introspective mental transformations under different states of consciousness to present an epiphanic snapshot of reality which is deeply disturbing, foreboding, paradoxical and free from traditional restraints. His autobiographical urban poems are a ticking bomb to undermine a consumerist public taste, a litmus paper to test its sanity when an outspoken, controversial and slangy nature of his art is exposed. This is an example of postmodern polyvocal performance poetry which is meant to be read aloud in public to resonate effectively. Despite obvious radicalization and marginalization of this type of art, it is, surprisingly, evocative and feasible in its extreme universality: dealing with current surface routine and subject matter it irrationally reveals a complete existential panorama of self-referential responses to rhetoric questions.

The “CONTEMPORARY” series issue #1 is presented in a form of an interview with the artist and accompanied with various cross-cultural explanations and analyses of his collection of poems “Near Death Experience” (2010) by the series mentor (O. V. Koliada) and the post-graduate students of a 2018/2019 aca-



demic year of the Institute of Foreign Philology, Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University, Ukraine. The issue is essentially manifested in a CD edition of the aforementioned volume of poems recorded by Bryan Lewis Saunders himself with musical backdrops of modern underground sound-engineers and released by Old Captain label, Ukraine, in August 2018.

The issue also represents B. L. Saunders' art of self-portraits, a daily ritual that has resulted in more than 11,000 drawings since 1995. The pictures are reproduced upon his permission and are particularly related to "Near Death Experience" period.

The issue gives free scope for interpretations on readers' behalf, stimulating their conscious and unconscious regions to experience true contemporary art first-hand, non-stock, spontaneously and impulsively, by outbursts and blackouts based solely on the artist's word, voice and image.

**O. V. Koliada, October 2018**



**Bryan Lewis Saunders**

**©2018 Billie Wheeler**

## QUESTIONS FROM THE ARTIST BRYAN LEWIS SAUNDERS

1. Do any of my ideas about art bother you?
2. Do any of these philosophical ideas seem unsound or sound foolish?
3. Is poetry able to advance humankind, and if so how?
4. What is the worst thing you have ever seen in a store?
5. Why can't we cry in public?
6. Why do you think we dream?
7. If you were an animal what kind of animal would you be and why?
8. Do you believe people should avoid being triggered and prevented from re-experiencing their past traumas?
9. Do you think live poetry should have warnings so the audience can be informed about all of the content of the poem before experiencing it? If so, why

10. Do you think art can change the world?
11. Does poetry have any practical benefits? Can poetry make people healthy?
12. Have you ever had a near death experience? If so, what was it like?
13. What is the meaning of life for you?

## PART I: INTRODUCTION

### AN INTERVIEW WITH BRYAN LEWIS SAUNDERS BY O. V. KOLIADA

(Non-proofread by the artist: "These were my one time shot all at once responses when I woke up this morning.")

30/09 – 01/10/2018; 06/10 – 08/10/2018; 09/10 – 11/10/2018)

**1. OVK: How would you define a literary movement your poetry can be associated with? Have you ever been a part of a literary group or individualistic isolation is your natural choice?**

**BLS: Well the sleep / dream work I call the *Stream of Unconsciousness (narrative mode)*.**

*OVK: In literary criticism, stream of unconsciousness is a narrative mode that represents a person's viewpoint by transcribing the authorial unconscious interaction or somniloquy while asleep, in connection to their actions in a dream. Stream of unconsciousness is marked by broken leaps in theme and plot, hybrid new word combinations, lifting of self-censorship, mono-conversations and syntax that can make the verbal patterns both menacing and weird to follow. Despite the name, the stream of unconsciousness manifests itself more in the form of mental blasts than a plausible coherent stream of dialogue. The stream of unconsciousness is one of several modes of dramatic monologue, where the protagonist is addressing somebody. Such monologues are used in such genres as poetry and drama, but with the stream of unconsciousness, the interlocutors are 'unaware' imaginary. It is primarily a quasi-device and often takes a tragic form. The notion was introduced to the sphere of literary studies through independent (underground) music industry, where it was further redefined by performance author and artist Bryan Lewis Saunders in 2005.*

**BLS: The spoken word and performance poetry I called *Stand-Up Tragedy*.**

*OVK: Stand-up tragedy is a type of tragic performance where a performer declares 'in-yer-face' of a live audience, speaking directly to them. The major point of Stand-up tragedy is to make the audience members share the emotional state of a performer, sympathize, cry, etc. Stand-up tragedy performances are usually time-consuming and presuppose the use of various audio / video media, highly emphatic monologues and rants, philippics 'spoke and shouted' at length in a wild, impassioned way, where the performer reads a speedy succession of tragic and low-key stories. Stand-up tragedy commonplace venues are pubs, night-clubs, private residences, art centers, galleries and universities. The roots of the term Stand up tragedy is indefinite. The comedian Brother Theodore (1906–2001) used it to illustrate his comic actions which were brooding, dark, edgy and absurdist. The Beat poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti (1919–) often addresses himself as a "stand-up tragedian", and performance artist Bryan Lewis Saunders uses it as a self-reference as well as to describe his artistic act in a literal meaning of the term.*

**I've never been part of a literary group. Both of those literary inventions are contrarian to genres in popular culture. Stream of Unconsciousness as opposed to Stream of consciousness, and Stand-Up Tragedy as opposed to Stand-Up Comedy. I think that my desire to create new things as well as a strong desire to be opposite or different from everyone else were major factors in the creation of those two movements or narrative modes. *It only takes one person to define a movement though but others must join in to validate it.* Only a few people have ever attempted Stand-Up Tragedy in the way that I would define it.**

**OVK:** *"It only takes one person to define a movement though but others must join in to validate it."*

**Which artistic / personal qualities are necessary to establish a group, let alone a movement? 'Joining-in' would naturally lead to diversification of the initial idea, at times leading astray, and the artistic genre of tragedy can easily regenerate into a funeral where even strangers are easily moved to tears.**

**BLS:** I'm not sure because I have never established a group or created a successful movement. Nor have I been a member of an art group. I really don't know what they do or what they are like. I like creating new forms and trying to open up new territories in art for others to explore.


**2. OVK: Regionally you are from a Southern state of Tennessee. Is it correct to assume you were influenced by the Southern Renaissance cultural mainstream of the 1920s? One of their major objectives was 'new criticism' spearheaded by John Crowe Ransom who demanded a new approach to read poetry, 'close reading', a self-sufficient aesthetic principle, autonomous, off historical context. Do you represent a modern form of the afore-mentioned criticism nowadays?**

**BLS:** No, I've never heard of any of this. I'm actually from Washington D.C. and *I began ranting in prison*. You could say that the origins of my performance poetry had more to do with missing prison spoons

than anything else. Every hour in prison the inmates were returned to our cells to be counted by the guards but sometimes a spoon would go missing after chow and we would be stuck in our cells indefinitely until the missing spoon was found. The metal spoon was so highly valued. It could be made into a really nasty weapon in just a little over 7 minutes and in 20 minutes you could turn that spoon into a really well crafted one. During these long periods of being locked down when spoons were missing the claustrophobia and hostility and aggression would set in and people would begin losing their minds screaming and yelling about all sorts of things. It was really liberating truly freeing. It was socially acceptable to lose one's mind in this environment. For me this ranting was an incredible release. Years later when I started writing I got my influence from other artists. Before I even began writing my own poems for performance I was reciting Lydia Lunch<sup>1</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> Lydia Lunch (born Lydia Anne Koch, June 2, 1959) is an American singer, poet, writer, actress and self-empowerment speaker. Her career was spawned by the New York no wave scene. Her work typically features provocative and confrontational noise music delivery, and has maintained an anti-commercial ethic, operating independently of major labels and distributors. Lunch's moniker was given to her by Willy DeVille, because she stole food for her friends. Lunch was named one of the most influential performers of the 1990s. Lunch has recorded and performed as a spoken word artist, collaborating with artists such as Exene Cervenka, Henry Rollins, Don Bajema and Hubert Selby Jr. as well as hosting spoken-word performance night 'The Unhappy Hour'. In 1997, Lunch released 'Paradoxia', a loose autobiography, in which she documented her early life, sexual history, substance abuse and mental health problems. The autobiography has since been concluded as various as "It's to the reader to determine whether Lunch's study goes deeper than that, or if instead, it's a kind of literary and philosophical repetition compulsion, a reprisal of greatest hits from male nihilists, sexual adventurers and chroniclers of deviance", "brutal but boring and predictable circus, about which Lunch shows no emotions. Only fatigue seems to have given her pause", or praised Lunch's candor while expressing reservations about her prose. <http://www.lydia-lunch.net/>





Nov. 25th, 2000 #3,268

"Under the Influence: Carbon Monoxide Inhalation"

Steven J. Bernstein<sup>1</sup> and Francis E. Dec Esq<sup>2</sup>. I owe a lot to those folks. Today I run the Steven Jesse Bernstein Museum out of my home in Tennessee. I've also been a big fan of hip hop since its beginnings. That too has to have had a large influence on me as well.

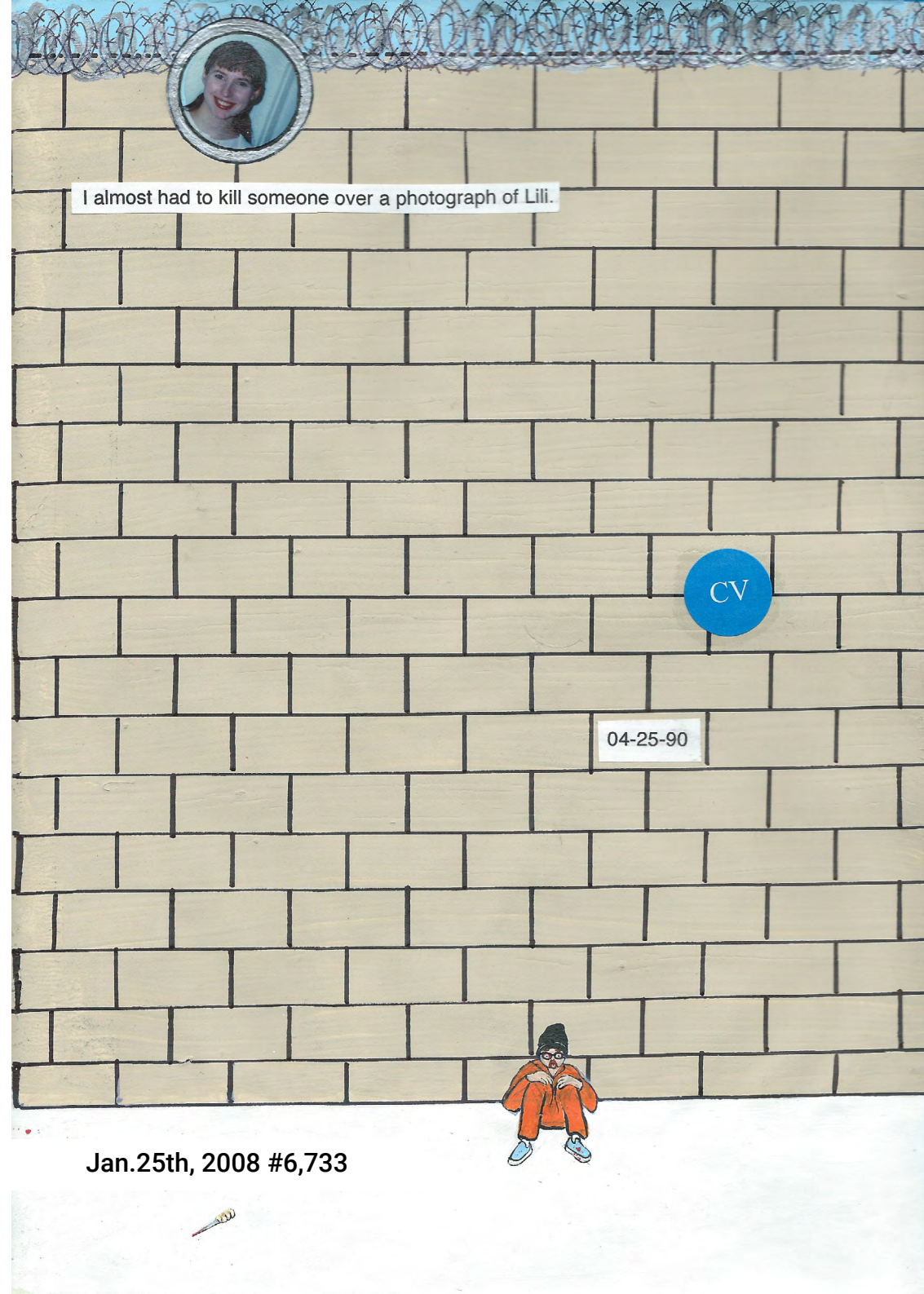
<sup>1</sup> Steven Jay "Jesse" Bernstein (December 4, 1950 – October 22, 1991) was a Jewish American underground writer and performance artist who is most famous for his recordings with Sub Pop records and close relationship with William S. Burroughs. Bernstein's substance abuse issues and mental illness contributed to his provocative local celebrity, though they ultimately culminated in his suicide. In January 1967, where he adopted the moniker Jesse, and began performing and self-publishing chapbooks of his poetry (the first chapbook was 'Choking On Sixth', 1979). Bernstein would become something of an icon to many in Seattle's underground music scene. Notable fans included Kurt Cobain and Oliver Stone. Though often noted for his connection to grunge and punk rock, Bernstein saw himself primarily as a poet and his live performances in Seattle, and he is credited as a major influence by many local poets from his era. According to one Seattle newspaper, he opened for music acts such as Nirvana, Big Black, Soundgarden, U-Men, and Cows: "He read poems from a stage with a live rodent in his mouth, its tail twitching as baseline punctuation. He tried to cut his heart out in order to hold it in his hands and calm it down. He once urinated on a heckler and tended to throw things: beer bottles, manuscripts, drumsticks, his wallet, a sandwich." The concept for the Bernstein album 'Prison' was for Jesse to do a raw, live performance at the State Penitentiary Special Offenders unit in Monroe, Washington in 1991. On October 22, 1991, at the age of 40, Bernstein committed suicide by stabbing himself in the throat while visiting friends. 'Prison' was released on April 1, 1992. 'I am Secretly an Important Man', a collection of poetry, short stories, and spoken performances, was released in March 1996. <http://www.daemonbernstein.com/jesse.html>

<sup>2</sup> Francis E. Dec, Esq. (1926-1996) was a U.S. lawyer, famous for collapsing into paranoid schizophrenia in the early sixties, henceforth living as a recluse and mass-mailing wild, paranoid typewriter-keyed rants around the country. The 'So Bad, It's Good' inanity and downright hilarious insanity, as well as the all-caps, over-dramatic format of his rants have caused them to gain a Cult Classic status. Dec's rants detail a complicated, highly contradictory, universe-spanning conspiracy, presided over by the Worldwide Mad Deadly Communist Gangster Computer God, and involving Mind Control of the whole human race, invisible cities on the far side of the moon, as well as pretty much every single non-Slavic race (Dec was a Polish supremacist). Common antagonists in Dec's life included Jewish Nazis, Communist-Catholic warrior monks with poison-coated swords and night vision goggles, and CIA-affiliated Ethiopian gangster perverts who had apparently covertly taken over Nassau County, NY for the purposes of anally abusing the populace while they slept. [http://allthetropes.wikia.com/wiki/Francis\\_E.\\_Dec](http://allthetropes.wikia.com/wiki/Francis_E._Dec)

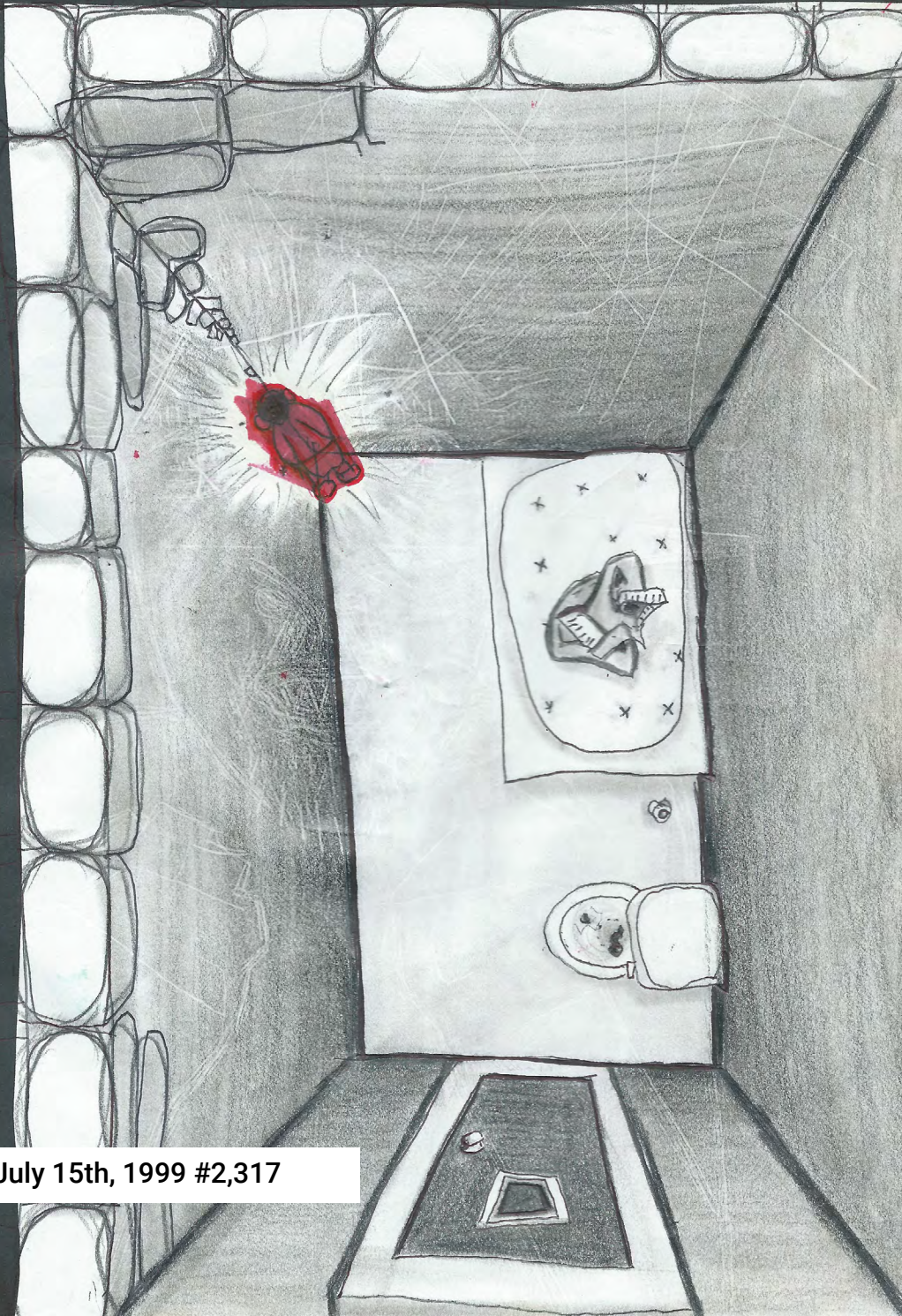


**OVK:** "...ranting in prison." Oscar Wilde, Gene Genet were among those artists who turned their prison experiences into art, reforming themselves or exploding into 'rant and rave' as an act of absurdist absolute freedom. What was a reaction of your inmates upon your spontaneous denunciation? Can you give an example of a prison slang poetry? Does prison reform or break a person in general?

**BLS:** I did one called the "Beach". It was written like an orientation speech to people arriving at prison for the first time. No one ever gave me that speech, so I wrote one containing all of the things that I needed to know and had to find out on my own.







July 15th, 1999 #2,317

Jan. 7th, 2008 #6,706



THE SURVIVORS -  
ARE THE ONES WITH THE SCREWDRIVERS



## "THE BEACH"

<p>Alright! Now listen up gentlemen! This is <i>Lorton</i>! This ain't the DC jail no more! This is Federal Prison! Orientation! HOW TO SURVIVE ON THE BEACH!</p> <p>Maximum Security Cell Block 3 198 Black inmates 5 Mexicans and me!</p> <p>Lightskin, Casper, White Devil, Elton John, and sometimes they call me <i>John Denver</i></p> <p>But when it comes down to it though <i>all day</i> <i>every day</i> I'm number 244-748 "WHITEBOY"</p>	<p><b>Prison slang / colloquialisms/ phenomena explanations:</b></p> <p><b>The Lorton Reformatory</b>, also known as the Lorton Correctional Complex, is a former prison complex in Lorton, Virginia, established in 1910 for the District of Columbia, United States. The facility was closed by law in the late 1990s.</p> <p>A <b>federal prison</b> is operated under the jurisdiction of a federal government as opposed to a state or provincial body. Federal prisons are used for convicts who violated federal law, inmates considered dangerous, or those sentenced to longer terms of imprisonment.</p> <p><b>Henry John Deutschendorf Jr.</b>, known as John Denver, was an American singer-songwriter, actor, activist, and humanitarian.</p> <p><b>All day:</b> A life sentence. <b>All day and a night:</b> Life without parole.</p>
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As in, "Nah fuck that! Whiteboy eats last!, Whiteboy don't need no milk — no desert! Whiteboy won't be here long"

"The average life span of a whiteboy aint but 48 hours — SO WHAT YOU STILL DOIN' HERE WHITEBOY? — MUST REALLY DONE SOMETHING WRONG!"

But that's all right though see  
I'm a *survivor*  
*survivin'*  
Been here 2 years, now I'm a  
teach you all how to survive.

*Crack heads*  
Dealers  
Armed Robbers  
Molesters  
Killers and Cop Killers  
Abductors, Kidnappers  
Drug Traffickers  
Rapists  
Mentally Ill folks with no papers  
Homeless Homosexuals  
and the "*Supa-Youngins*"  
(A gang of 17 year old home  
invaders

**Survival kit:** Bare minimum of what an inmate needs to live in a prison. Distributed at admission and in solitary confinement. Some combination of the following: pillow case or sheet rolled up with a sheet, blanket, pillow case, 2 pairs of socks, 2 underwear, 2 t-shirts, and a little bag with 1 hotel bar soap, 1 mini toothpaste, a mini pencil.

**Crack head:** One who does excessive amounts of crack.

**Supa-youngin:** A supa-youngin was a small gang of 17 year old kids but they were being charged



<p>with 8, 10, 12, 14, felonies each.)</p> <p>BUT THIS AIN'T ABOUT THEM THOUGH THIS IS ABOUT YOU SURVIVIN' ON THE BEACH!</p> <p>NOW! When they pop this block door you will not see no sunsets, seashells, and oceans the Beach here is mattress, metal, <i>cinderblocks</i>, and CON- CRETE</p> <p>A row of 18 <i>bunk beds</i> open exposed with no protection but a blanket, sheet and pillows and if you got that when the lights go out you'll need 'em</p> <p>'CAUSE ON THE BEACH – IT'S GONNA RAIN!</p> <p>In other words, It's livin' hell 'til they find you a cell. LIVING HELL 'TIL THEY FIND YOU CELL!</p> <p>NOW ! There ain't no bathrooms and toilets on the Beach So piss in the shower DON'T SHIT FOR TWO WEEKS</p>	<p>as adults because of their serious crimes. Most had many felonies like home invasion and murder, they did not know each other from the streets and together they killed people in prison.</p> <p><b>Cinder block:</b> a lightweight building brick made from small cinders mixed with sand and cement.</p> <p><b>Bunk bed:</b> a piece of furniture consisting of two beds, one above the other, that form a unit.</p>
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<p>HOLD IT! 'TIL THEY FIND YOU A CELL HOLD IT! 'TIL THEY FIND YOU A CELL</p> <p>Don't take no favors Don't borrow nobody's toilet Don't owe nobody nothin' And especially don't be <i>shadow boxin'</i> – so can't no one say you're bluffin'</p> <p>NOW! When we get in here The first thing you need on the Beach is a carton of <i>Kools</i> 'cause the plumber's an inmate too AND HAS TOOLS!</p> <p>NOW PAY ATTENTION!</p> <p>THE SURVIVORS – ARE THE ONES WITH THE SCREWDRIVERS! I'll say it again THE SURVIVORS – ARE THE ONES WITH THE SCREWDRIVERS!</p> <p>Now don't get carried away with claw hammers and saw blades YOU WILL LOSE THEM – BEFORE YOU USE THEM I swear to God I've seen it with my own eyes every time</p>	<p>In <b>shadowboxing</b>, only one person is required to participate; the participant throws punches into the air at no one in particular or an imaginary opponent.</p> <p><b>Kool</b> (stylized as KOOL) is an American brand of menthol cigarette.</p>
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<p>THE SURVIVORS – ARE THE ONES WITH THE SCREWDRIVERS!</p> <p>NOW ! When we get to fightin' on the beach alright? You're gonna here everybody yellin', "ITAINTOVERTILIT'S OVERCAUSETHEC.O. CAN'TSEENOTHIN'INTHESAND! What that means is The Beach has two ends to it see One end is the bullet proof <i>bubble</i> and TV, that's where the guards hide at. On the other end, that's the sand. That's where can't nobody see nothin' and the "Supa-youngins" be doin' there fowl ass evil shit on fools.</p> <p>NOW! The survivor is not gonna come in here <i>runnin' his mouth</i> on the Beach especially NOT IN THE SAND</p> <p>What the survivor says AFTER THE FIGHT is, "IT AIN'T OVER! 'TIL THERE'S A WIPED DOWN SCREWDRIVER STUCK IN AN <i>EYEBALL</i> SOCKET SOMEWHERE!"</p>	<p><b>C.O.:</b> Corrections Officer, Prison Guard.</p> <p><b>Bubble:</b> Bullet proof space where the correctional officers could oversee the cell block and observe inmates in safety.</p> <p><b>Run (one's) mouth:</b> To talk profusely, especially in an antagonizing way. "Don't worry about him. He likes to run his mouth, but he won't do anything."</p> <p><b>Eyeball:</b> When someone is staring at you or your things</p>
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<p>Alright ? I've been stabbed. I've been stabbed 7 times with a phillips head screwdriver - but they didn't put it in my eyeball see? I'm a survivor survivin'.</p> <p>NOW ! Let's talk about the Mexicans There ain't but 5 of 'em up in this joint and most the time they invisible but now sometimes they ain't FUCK OVER ONE MEXICAN AND ALL 5 BE FUCKIN' YOU MANE! BROWN UNION B.U. BUTT FUCKED AND DEAD That's how they do. nuff said, THEY MEXICAN!</p> <p>NOW ! Let's talk about the Cigarettes NOWSOME OF YALL COMIN' FROM THE D.C. JAIL GOT 2 for 1's WITH YA (Took one cigarette, owe two back) NOW YOU'RE HERE MMMMM HHHHHMMMMM IT AIN'T LIKE THAT</p> <p>I SEEN MANY MOTHER FUCKERS COME HERE FIRST THING TAKIN' 5 FOR 1 PACKS!</p>	<p>they are said to be eyeballing you. Also, naturally, is the human vision organ. People would try to put the screwdrivers in the eyeball because the eyeball tissue was soft and led directly to the brain.</p>
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<p>WITH NOTHIN' TO PAY NOBODY BACK</p> <p>Y'ALL MOTHER FUCKERS GONNA DIE !</p> <p>They got a cardboard box in the back put your family name on it pack your shit I'll send it home YOU GONNA DIE !</p> <p>WHEN IT RAIN FIRST THING YOU GONNA DIE !</p> <p>NOW ! Let's talk about the rain. Now the mind is a wonderful thing sometimes but now sometimes the mind can be sick! We got mother fuckers in here locked down in their cells for 2 years 9 months plus Ain't been out can't get out AIN'T BEEN OUT ONCE! Now they're bathin' in their own filth in sink all the sinks are backed up got <i>tadpoles</i> and shit in it 'cause the plumber can't keep no tools CHAIN SMOKIN' KOOLS ! and they got nothin' but time, nothin' but time to investigate and <i>eperimentate</i></p>	<p><b><i>Tadpole:</i></b> An early stage of life for a frog. Also, semen.</p> <p><b><i>Experiment.</i></b></p>
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<p>with all different types of shit AND NOW THEY DONE LOST THEIR MINDS !</p> <p>SO! When we first get in here and hit the Beach there's gonna be some ocean <i>spray</i> IT AIN'T NOTHIN'!</p> <p>But what that is, IS The cells on the bottom tier that surround the Beach got these sick fools up in here and as a matter of fact THEY GONNA SPIT AND MASTURBATE INTO THEY OWN HANDS AND THROW THAT!</p> <p>I DON'T BE FUCKING WITH YOU! YOU'LL SEE SOME SHIT NOW WHEN THEY POP THAT DOOR! THEY DON'T KNOW YOU THEY DON'T KNOW YOU FROM THE STREETS THEY DON'T BE FUCKIN' WITH YOU YOU ON THE BEACH! YOU NEW! So they gonna fuck with you to see if you're a survivor</p> <p>NOW ! After you get you a screwdriver you need to get you a trash bags cut some holes in the bottom</p>	<p><b><i>Urine.</i></b> Also: <b><i>Pepper spray.</i></b></p>
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<p>and make you a rain coat</p> <p>'CAUSE TONIGHT – IT'S GONNA RAIN !</p> <p>and it don't rain rain on the Beach neither.</p> <p>It rains brimstone, body fluids, human waste, <i>IPEDS</i>, fire, and anything else that'll burn.</p> <p>And when it rains on the Beach it rains on every one everywhere except for the survivor who left the wiped down screwdriver STUCK IN AN EYEBALL SOCKET SOMEWHERE</p> <p>SEE HOW THIS WORK?</p> <p>He's a survivor survivin'.</p> <p>NOW !</p> <p>You got your blanket.</p> <p>Don't lose that, you gots to keep that with you at all times</p> <p>TAKE IT TO <i>CHOW!</i></p> <p>Take your blanket, your sheet, your mattress to chow 'cause it'll be gone now</p> <p>AND YOU NEED ALL THAT WHEN IT RAINS!</p> <p>NOW TONIGHT</p> <p>AFTER THE COUNT</p> <p>BEFORE IT RAINS</p> <p>THERE'S GONNA BE SOME THUNDER AND LIGHTENING</p> <p>It ain't nothin'</p>	<p><b><i>IPEDS:</i></b> Improvised Prison Explosive Devices.</p> <p><b><i>Chow:</i></b> A meal, food. Also: <b><i>Dinner and a show:</i></b> When inmates eat in the chow hall and watch other inmates fight and get pepper-sprayed by the guards.</p>
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<p>Now what that is, IS</p> <p>That's the IPEDS see?</p> <p>That's Improvised Prison Explosive Devices</p> <p>THIS AIN'T NOTHIN' LIKE THE MOVIES AND TV!</p> <p>THIS IS THE BEACH</p> <p>Y'ALL MOTHER FUCKERS GONNA DIE!</p> <p>Now the thunder.</p> <p>What that is, IS</p> <p>That's homemade napalm ramen noodle bombs</p> <p>and now most of the time they be putin' their feces in it.</p> <p>THIS AIN'T NO JOKE!</p> <p>When these mother fuckers was on the Beach 3 years ago –</p> <p>THEY WAS WATCHIN' THE LEARNING CHANNEL REAL CLOSE!</p> <p>Y'ALL MOTHER FUCKERS DON'T KNOW!</p> <p>They make a battery detonation device</p> <p>with a grapefruit, a <i>nickel</i>, a <i>penny</i> and 2 TV wires.</p> <p>Mix rubbing alcohol with <i>detergent</i></p> <p>GOT NAPALM</p> <p>pack that into the Ramen noodle molds with the feces</p> <p>AND IT'S ON!</p> <p>AND IT'S ON YOU NOW</p>	<p><b><i>Penny and nickel:</i></b> Coins.</p> <p><b><i>Detergent:</i></b> A water-soluble cleansing agent that combines with impurities and dirt to make them more soluble.</p> <p><b><i>Napalm:</i></b> a highly flammable sticky jelly used in incendiary</p>
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<p>THUNDERING!</p> <p>Now the Lightning. It's another IPED but it's different though</p> <p>What that is, IS TNT METHANE FECAL DYNAMITE!</p> <p>With the empty paper towel and toilet paper rolls they will pack that up with the methane fecal freak materials THEN LIGHT THAT AND – IT – WILL – BE – ON -YOU – AND – IT – WILL – EXPLODE – GENTLEMENS! And if it gets in your eyes you in trouble</p> <p>Ain't no duds up in this joint it's air tight they got the seals right they know what they be doin' in here they been doin' this a long time.</p> <p>They pack it up pack it in light it it's on</p> <p>AND IT'S ON YOU NOW LIGHTNING!</p>	<p>bombs and flamethrowers, consisting of gasoline thickened with special soaps.</p> <p><b>TNT</b>(Trinitrotoluene: <i>[traɪˌnaɪtroʊˈtɒljuːn]</i>):is a convention for expressing energy, typically used to describe the energy released in an explosion. Methane (<i>[ˈmeθeɪn]</i>): is a chemical compound and is the main constituent of natural gas.</p>
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<p>Now the best thing for you to do when it's thunders and lightnin' is to cover up when you feel somethin' burnin' on you kick it off</p> <p>BUT DO NOT I REPEAT DO NOT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES NEVER EVER COVER UP YOUR HEAD YOU WILL END UP DEAD!</p> <p>YOU KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN AT ALL TIMES NOW THAT'S WHAT YOU DO! NOW THAT'S WHAT YOU DO! YOU KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN AT ALL TIMES</p> <p>Alright we gotta move it along you're survivin' you a survivor you got a bag a screwdriver you gonna survive alright? You survive the first night – it gets better you survive the second night – you gonna survive. You're survivin' you a survivor you're gonna survive.</p> <p>NOW!</p>	
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WHEN THE SHIT GOES DOWN  
 TONIGHT  
 AND IT'S ON  
 AND EVERYTHING IS ON FIRE  
 AND IT'S REALLY COMIN' DOWN  
 THUNDERIN' NAPALM RAMEN  
 NOODLE BOMB  
 LIGHTNIN' METHANE FECAL  
 DYNAMITE  
 POURIN' URINE, FECES, FIRE,  
 RAIN, AND OCEAN SPRAY  
 AND YOU AIN'T GOT YOUR SHIT  
 'CAUSE YOU BORROWED A  
 SUPA-YOUNGINS TOILET BY  
 ACCIDENT  
 AND NOW ALL YOU ON THE  
 BEACH  
 FIGHTIN' OVER SCREWDRIVERS,  
 BLANKETS, BAGS AND SHEETS  
 AND NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME  
 YOU REALIZE WHERE THE FUCK  
 YOU AT  
 AND IT AIN'T NO BEACH  
 BUT BESIDE THAT  
 YOU AT THE WRONG END FACE  
 DOWN IN THE SAND WITH THE  
 YOUNGINS TAKEN TURNS WITH  
 WHAT USED TO BE A MAN  
 KNOW THIS!  
  
 MY MOUTH WAS THE SWORD  
 OF TRUTH!  
  
 AND THE BEST THING FOR YOU  
 TO DO  
 IS GET RELIGIOUS AND HOLD  
 ON

IT AIN'T NOTHIN'  
 WA ALAIKUM SALAM  
 YAKUB  
 FIVE PERCENT  
 SIGNS  
 SYMBOLS  
 TROGLODYTES  
 AND FARRAKHAN

You don't know this shit you gonna die.

And think about it like this,  
 y'all mother fuckers  
 you the tide comin' in see?  
 About 2 times a day  
 prison waves  
 draggin' fools away.

Whether you survive or don't  
 survive  
 society's sleepin' good tonight

AWAY  
 THEY'VE THROWN YOUR ASS  
 AWAY  
 NOW!

Times up gentlemen  
 get your carton of Kools ready  
 put your mattress over your  
 back  
 do what you gots to do to  
 survive

READY?  
 ALRIGHT  
 POP CELL BLOCK 3!

***Wa alaikum salam:*** Wa alaykumu as-salam or Wa 'alaykum al-salaam is an Arabic greeting often used by Muslims around the world translating nearly to «And unto you peace», but is often considered the equivalent to «hello» or «good day» in English.

***Yakub:*** Yakub or Yaqub (Arabic): A male given name.

***Five percent:*** The Five-Percent Nation, sometimes referred to as NGE or NOGE, the Nation of Gods and Earths, or the Five Percenters, is a movement founded in 1964 in the Harlem section of the borough of Manhattan, New York City. Members of the group call themselves Allah's Five Percenters, which reflects the concept that ten percent of the people in the world know the truth of existence, and those elites and agents opt to keep eighty-five percent of the world in ignorance and under their controlling thumb; the remaining five percent are those who know the truth and are determined to enlighten the eighty-five percent.

***Troglodyte:*** A person who lives away from the coasts and metropolises, once referred to

GOT NEW SUNBATHERS ON  
THE BEACH TONIGHT NOW  
POP IT!

as a 'hinterlander' but no longer deserving of that otherwise-dignified term. He regards himself as a «real American» and his culture as that of such. He is adamant about his Second Amendment rights but isn't very interested in those other, less-relevant amendments that only the judges and politicians- who he scorns as being «leeches»—care about. He hates the idea of more laws, government or regulation of anything that reduce what he regards as «freedom», itself a word that he flings about without care. He hates non-real Americans, i.e. American citizens who are unlike himself, and those who he hates the most passionately are Muslims, all of whom he associates with the 9/11 attacks. In his telling you what's wrong with the U.S. and the way things ought to be, he could endlessly expand this definition without even knowing he is doing so.

**Farrakhan:** Louis Farrakhan Sr., formerly known as Louis X, is an American religious leader, black nationalist, activist, and social commentator. He is the leader of the religious group Nation of Islam (NOI).

## ASSIGNMENTS FOR STUDENTS 1

### Lead-In Activity

1. What are your typical associations with a beach? Can you describe ideal weather conditions for going out to beach?

2. When you see a sign "*HOW TO SURVIVE ON THE BEACH!*", which precautions should be kept in mind?

### While-Reading Activity

#### Comprehension:

1. What is the name of a federal prison BLS was an inmate in? How does a federal prison differ from a provincial jail?

2. Which national communities do the prisoners represent and how they are distributed?

3. What were the nicknames BLS had?

4. How would you describe a common attitude to a white prisoner in Lorton?

5. What is the content of the Survival Kit?

6. Enumerate the types of criminals inside the "cells".

7. Which instructions does BLS give to the reader concerning one's behavior in prison?

8. Why isn't smocking considered a bad habit in prison?

9. Which tool is considered the most effective to survive? Why are "claw hammers and saw blades" use-

less?

10. The 'Beach' is represented in two different forms: for officers and for inmates. How do those two contrast with each other?

11. How seriously was BLS injured?

12. Which tier of the bunk bed is more preferable?

13. How is it possible to protect oneself from the 'rain' on the 'beach'?

14. What do "SOME THUNDER AND LIGHTENING" represent?

15. What channel did the inmates watch to make napalm in a cell?

16. What information does BLS submit about religion in prison?

17. Who are those "NEW SUNBATHERS" mentioned in the last line of the poem?

### Analysis

What leads people to commit a crime? Do you think people of particular nature or mentality are more inclined to be criminally-minded?

What makes prison slang so addictive and powerful? Can it be viewed as another international language with universal rules?

1. Explain denotative and connotative meanings of BLS nicknames:

*Lightskin*

*Casper*

*White Devil*

*Elton John*

*John Denver*

*WHITEBOY*

2. Why is the content of the Survival Kit only practical? Do you think it is necessary to add (or remove) anything from it?

3. Rank the criminals of the prison according to the severity of the crime. Give your arguments to each type. Which category do you think BLS had been classified with?

*Crack heads*

*Dealers*

*Armed Robbers*

*Molesters*

*Killers and Cop Killers*

*Abductors, Kidnappers*

*Drug Traffickers*

*Rapists*

*Mentally Ill folks with no papers*

*Homeless Homosexuals*

*"Supa-Youngins"*

4. "When they pop this block door you will not see no sunsets, seashells, and oceans the Beach here is mattress, metal, cinderblocks, and CON-CRETE". Explain a figurative meaning of the usual beach sights and their grotesque transformation in a prison.

5. What does rain, lightning, thunder as elemental



weather attributes represent in the course of the poem and how they affect the poet?

6. Do you find the “survival” manual presented by BLS reasonable enough? His advice is simple yet why is it so important to follow the rule to the point?

7. “ ‘cause the plumber’s an inmate too AND HAS TOOLS!” How do you understand this colloquial phrase when it deals with a box of cigarettes? What other forms of currency might be used in prison?

8. Fights in prisons are usually rare but brutal. “IT AINT OVER TIL IT’S OVER CAUSE THE C.O. CAN’T SEE NOTHIN’ IN THE SAND!”. Explain the reasons that can trigger aggression and lead to a brawl. Why do you think guards (C.O.) prefer to stay aside in the ‘sand’?

9. The representation of the ‘Beach’ with its caste-system and privileged/underprivileged classes is striking:

*“The Beach has two ends to it see  
One end is the bullet proof bubble and TV,  
that’s where the guards hide at.  
On the other end, that’s the sand.”*

Can you find an appropriate example of the same division from the outside-of-prison world? What is a metaphor of “beach” then?

10. Why do you think ‘being stabbed’ is mentioned as a part of survival?

11. “Now the mind is a wonderful thing sometimes but now sometimes the mind can be sick!” How do these lines explain numbing and twisting of one’s mind and

deterioration of one’s needs and sensations inside a prison cell? What exactly does make the mind sick to the point of loss: “time to investigate and e(x)perimintate with all different types of shit AND NOW THEY DONE LOST THEIR MINDS!”?

12. Why do you think the process of making “Im-provised Prison Explosive Devices” rendered in detail? What does the actual usage of the ‘devices’ tell the reader about the mental state of the inmates?

13. Explain an ‘explosive’ irony in the following lines: “When these mother fuckers was on the Beach 3 years ago – THEY WAS WATCHIN’ THE LEARNING CHANNEL REAL CLOSE”.

14. Why do you think BLS says: “I REPEAT DO NOT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES NEVER EVER COVER UP YOUR HEAD YOU WILL END UP DEAD!” ? What kind of menace or danger he means when saying that one shouldn’t hide from ‘rain’, ‘thunder’ or ‘lightning’?

15. Explain the stylistic usage of a phrase: “MY MOUTH WAS THE SWORD OF TRUTH!”.

16. The poem contains several references to different religious groups and radicalized communities. How does “GET RELIGIOUS” change one’s destiny in prison? Why does religion do the trick there?

17. What does the phrase “NEW SUNBATHERS” tell us about a penitentiary system at large?

### Lead-Out Activity

Give an existential interpretation of the ‘Beach’ as

a part of human condition, point of view or reality we are exposed to.

### *Extra Reading Activity*

#### **"A PENCIL ERASER"**

*by Bryan Lewis Saunders*

An arrow shaped pencil eraser  
Removable  
Most commonly pink or blue  
In the real world  
They come a dime a dozen  
The market flooded  
Can be found anywhere  
For next to nothing  
Of little worth  
Made in China  
Mass produced

In prison  
A pencil eraser  
Something of extreme value and importance  
Something an inmate can fixate on and kill for

I borrowed a pencil  
From a locked down Supa-Youngin  
With a removable eraser on it  
I let somebody else borrow the pencil

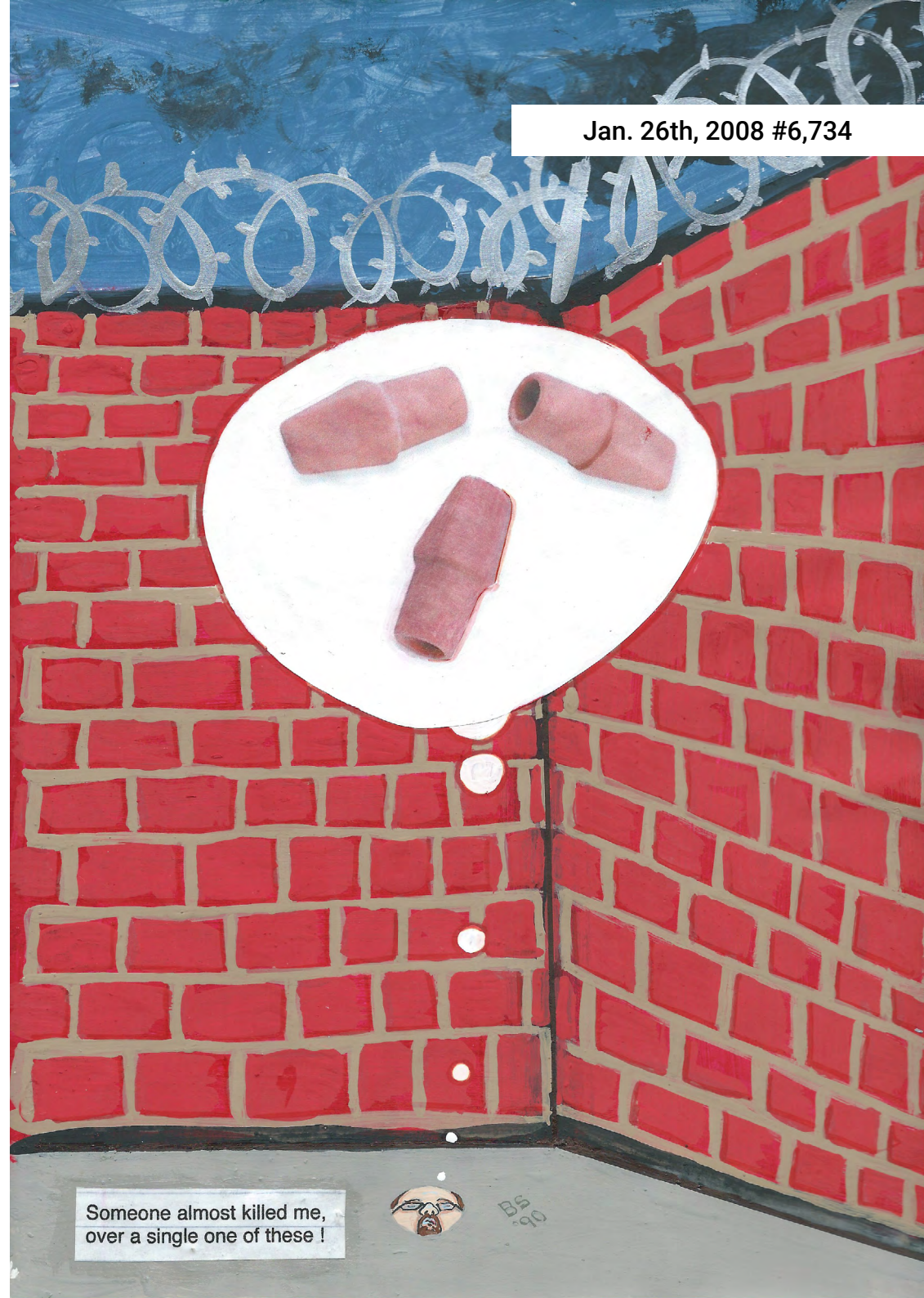
And when they returned the pencil to me  
The eraser was missing  
The Supa-Youngin lost his mind  
And he wanted me to die  
Literally  
Over a pencil eraser  
He hurled a constant barrage of death threats at me  
Every time he saw me  
He threatened to kill me  
And could back it up  
His eraser was gone  
He had been violated  
The hate  
Ate him up inside  
All day long  
As if he'd been raped

If my grandmother hadn't mailed me  
A whole package of pencil erasers immediately  
I would have died  
A week after giving the Supa-Youngin  
Two brand new pencil erasers  
The COs shook his cell down and found  
A machete made from a trash can lid  
Hidden under his mattress  
And two more shanks  
In a round Slim Jim container  
That he used as a pencil holder  
He was mad

Preparing for a bloodbath  
Over a pencil eraser  
With nothing to live for  
And anything to kill for  
Especially  
A pencil eraser

2007.

Jan. 26th, 2008 #6,734



Someone almost killed me,  
over a single one of these !



BS  
'90



**BLS:** I saw people transformed into psychotic animals and monsters. I don't want to say never but I can not imagine those people ever being able to be reformed. I was reformed to some extent but I believe that I was one of the lucky ones.

**OVK:** *"... the origins of my performance poetry had more to do with missing prison spoons..."*

Urban dictionary has an entry to "prison spoon", by the way: "When you're eating a brown bag lunch only to realize you didn't bring something to eat with and you fashion a device to eat with out of something else<sup>1</sup> ." **Does it bring an extra meaning to the origins of your early unconventional extreme poetic experience?**

*"It was socially acceptable to lose one's mind in this environment."*

**Losing one's mind is a feature of true freedom, isn't it? Or it is the only way possible to keep your sanity under such pressure?**

**BLS:** That makes sense about the spoon. Prisoner's have to get pretty creative with tools. They become experts at making something from nothing. Alchemists and physicists really.

Now that I think about it, the psychosis I saw and experienced was not really an act of freedom even when it felt like that. It probably only seemed liberating because what was likely happening were large sudden changes in hormones and brain chemistry. As if ones serotonin was depleted and cortisol levels were crip-

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=prison%20spoon>

pling and then by engaging in a drastic change in behavior perhaps adrenalin and testosterone would kick in and upend the current state of despair creating brief moments of euphoria or something. I have no knowledge of brain chemistry but now that I think about it I can imagine that that was more likely to be the cause.

**3. OVK: Your poetic approach is extremely introvert, based on your retrospective personal experiences and intuitions, whereas your artistic representation, reading poems in public or at least aloud, declamation, is totally opposite: a self-effusive powerful blast, unrestrained and exorcist-like. How important is the image of 'persona' to you while reading your poems to the audience?**

**BLS:** Well I've pretty much decided that for me personally *expression is better than repression*. For me, expressing my innermost unwanted negative feelings and fears and outrage about things is better than trying to contain it. For 10 years or so I let my feelings out in spurts. Had I not done that and instead tried to keep all of those feelings suppressed down deep inside of me the chances are quite great that I would have really exploded again and ended up back in prison or worse. Persona is the vehicle I channel the emotional state through. *There is no "acting" only the act of being.*

**OVK:** *"... expression is better than suppression."*

*"There is no "acting" only the act of being."*

**Have you ever been silenced down, censored by**

**the crowd, authority? Is there any taboo subject-matter for your expression?**

**BLS:** No. But one time I was punched in the middle of reading a Steven Jesse Bernstein poem on stage. When later asked why the attacker said, "Jesus is coming and he is coming soon." A few years later he believed his father was a vampire and began stabbing him in his sleep. His mother tried stopping him and he went to a mental hospital. He is out now.

**OVK:** **Have you ever thought of your way of "being" as an act of therapy, especially to the audience, because many feel at first uncomfortable or even ashamed at your rants whereas in reality they let their suppressed ideas out triggered by poetry?**

**BLS:** In the beginning when I was doing Stand-Up Tragedy audience members who had similar tragic experiences as me would let me know about them afterward and urge me to never stop sharing. Their tears were positive as if I was speaking for them as well. All of my stories had a positive message, moral or lesson so there was no cruelty inflicted on others who were like me. They may have been triggered but there is nothing wrong with that. To trigger someone is to release their repressed feelings. The goal is to let it out in ways that are helpful. Now, there were times later on where my performances seemed more like my therapy was the audience's trauma. This was after I changed from doing Stand-Up Tragedy to something else. See I started off trying to make strangers cry but then later

that turned into wanting to make the psychopaths in the audience feel like they were going to die. That is the period that the Near Death Experience album comes from. The psychopaths in the Stand-Up Tragedy performances would not cry but instead would laugh and be thoroughly entertained and overjoyed with the worst and most shocking parts of the performance. They were also becoming more and more disturbed. One audience member confided in me that he had found a female torso floating in the Hudson river and kept it for a few days and was doing inappropriate things with it. Others wanted to masturbate and hurt animals with me... So I started changing my performances in order to try and reach those few types of people in the crowd. The people that would leave in the middle of the performances were already feeling caring human beings so I was no longer performing for them. Instead I wanted to see if I could force the others who stayed to have feelings and I thought panic and an imminent sense of death might be the first step towards doing that.

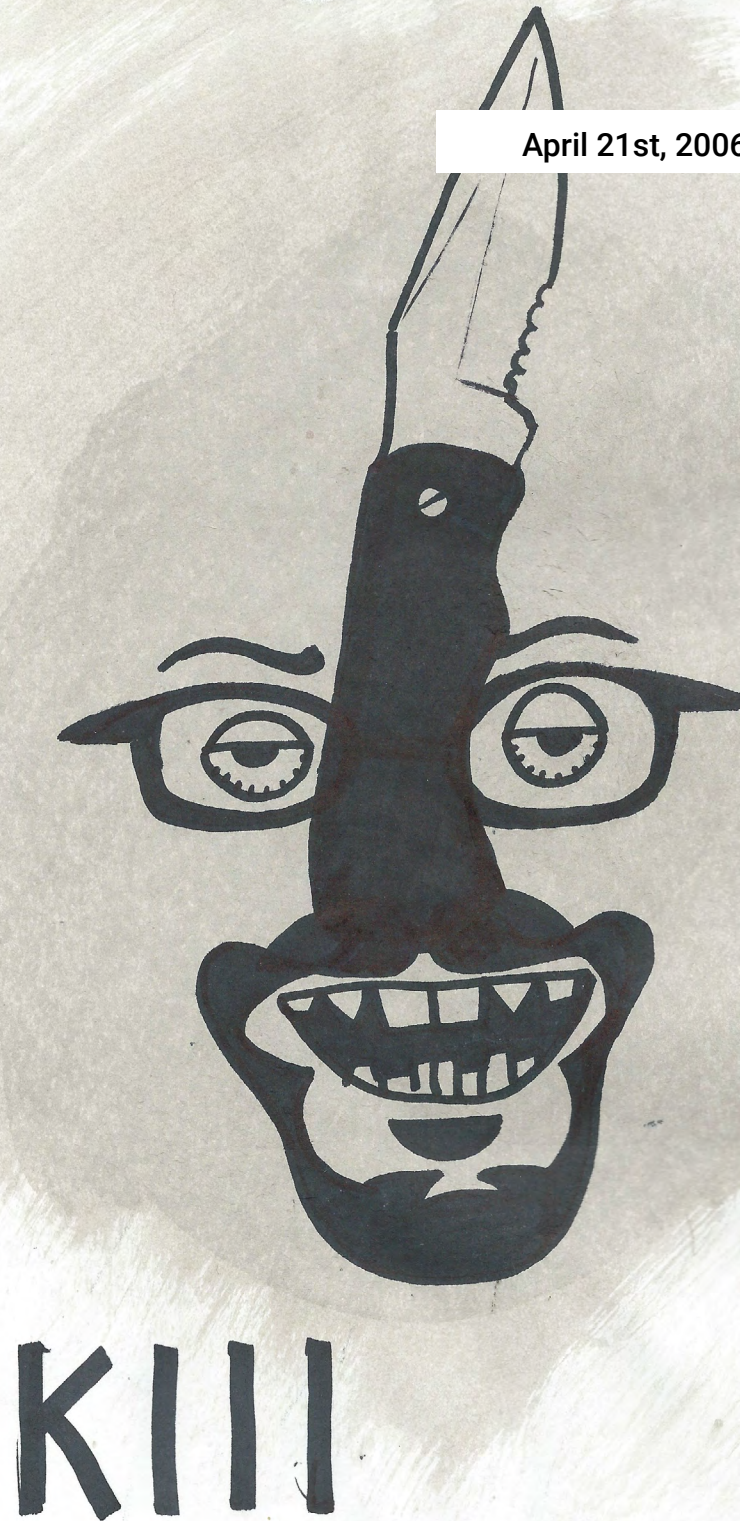
**4. OVK: One of the core semantic fields of your poetics is pain, self-inflicting torture, punishment. It brings some parallels with medieval flogging and Puritan self-discipline through a rigid code of behavior, sometimes to the point of ecstatic masochism. How relevant are those rituals to your current idea about 'representing' your art? Is this fanatical self-posses-**



sion as an artist the only way to get your message across?

**BLS:** There was a time in my youth where I felt very guilty and angry with myself about my feelings, beliefs, thoughts and behaviors, and I totally wanted to punish myself but I have long since moved on from that. I don't think much about those kinds of ideas anymore. Nowadays I believe that there is more than one kind of "art" but to me "real art" whether it is music, or literature, or painting, or photography, or performance, or film or whatever, to me "*real art*" is just another word for advancement. Art is advancement.

April 21st, 2006 #5,984



We must continue to advance and we can not so easily reduce or belittle this definition of art to “advancement for advancement’s sake” like we often do with so many other activities that we engage in because advancement implies advantage, a higher quality, an improvement or upgrade. It removes any and all incestuous stagnation of thought and replaces it with ideas like health, tool making, technology, growth, and so much more. This definition of art brings it back to a biological place where I believe art really belongs. It is one of the things that makes our species unique. I’m now much more interested in exploring themes like torture and pain as psychological or kinesthetic or physical sensory phenomenon to be explored. To approach these activities as psycho-physical mysteries or problems to be explored and perhaps one day even solved. Doing that takes away the self abuse and replaces the old meanings with a common cause for good. Once I began defining art as advancement I then began to take stock of the other elements of what that definition entails; problem solving, creativity, inspiration, experience, influence, mutation, evolution and so on. Self-possession can be incredibly unhealthy and yet obsession is extremely important to creativity and problem solving so like everything in life there must be a balance.

OVK: *“...“real art” is just another word for advancement.”*

**In other words you do still believe in mankind,**

**right, and art saves the world? Don’t you think that humanity has recently degraded irreversibly moving steadily ‘from a man to an ape’ backwards which is too a biological factor? More than ever today we witness ‘Darwin award’ behavior rather than evolutionary agenda.**

**BLS:** I don’t believe that art can save the world but I strongly believe it can help people. I have a very negative outlook for humankind but I try to circumvent that ideation with better ones when possible. I once read that all of the people that are alive today can be traced back to a small population of app. 60 individuals, and that more than once people migrated out of Africa. I have two hopes. One is that after humans destroy the planet perhaps 60 more people from Africa will survive to spread out again and hopefully they can adapt to the destroyed world conditions and mutate into another animal in the future. The other hope is that we create another intelligence and begin to let it make most of our decisions for us. Psychologists have now discovered over 150 cognitive biases and even if a person is aware of them and is knowledgeable about them and knows how and when they occur, they will still make them. It is incredible. Just knowing about these errors in thinking does not prevent us from continuing to make these errors in thinking. The only hope is that we create something else that will be able to make all of our decisions for us and think correctly hahaha!

**5. OVK: 'Near Death Experience' collection was accompanied with a performance of sewing your mouth shut, exposing pain in a metaphorical way, taking into consideration an avalanche of textual material juxtaposed silence. Why is it crucial to you to plunge yourself into a particular extreme condition, like total blindness, deafness, influence of temperatures, etc?**

**BLS:** *I often think of my work in terms of creating problems for myself* so I can learn how to solve them, or show others different ways of possibly solving them. That seems to be a constant thread throughout all of the different forms of art I work with. Sensory problems are really special because they are so important to how we function. For example my deaf month became extremely visual and my blind month could in fact have been called a great exercise in hearing because of the changes I experienced. Prolonged experimentation with ones senses can be extremely inspiring. The experiences are so massive that I don't quite know how to talk about them in general terms. As humans we create our own meanings, our brains through natural selection and mutation have especially developed in order to create meanings and to organize things for our survival. The meanings that we create and the way that we organize things is dependent upon the types of problems we face and questions that arise. When I experiment with drawing and my senses or create unusual experiences, I am in essence creating huge problems for myself that generate a lot of

thought and questions. I'm not sure how to talk about it beyond that yet really.

**OVK:** *"I often think of my work in terms of creating problems for myself..."*

**Does it mean when the problem is solved you discover a hidden region of immense capacity inside to be track-and-traced only within extreme boundaries and that extra energy which is revealed and exposed (stored) can further be utilized for the next advancement experiment? A universal species easily fit to whatever environment?**

**BLS:** No, nothing like that I don't think. See, all of these sensory experiments are subjective and very personal experiences so I have no way of really identifying the true causation of anything I experience. I may think that I'm hallucinating for 10 days straight because I have tried to make myself deaf, but in reality the visual hallucinations could have been from stress induced psychosis or sleep deprivation or even copper poisoning. There is little objectivity involved. But I believe that many things can still be discovered and learned from experimenting with the senses. The history of science and knowledge is filled with people who sought to make sense of anomalies. So sometimes I find myself wanting to discover some anomalies that others with better resources and education will then set out to try and solve. I always try to have a more down to earth and practical, objective outlook. It is only through art that I can realistically envision a place for myself in the



story of humankind in spite of my lack of education and resources etc.

**6. OVK: Is it essential to you express yourself via free verse, dramatic monologue and stream-of-consciousness techniques? Why do you consider those episodic fragmentary reality is more adequate and true than the one arranged conventionally in rhymed couplets and classical poetic meters?**

**BLS:** Different tools serve different purposes. I don't do free verse or stream of conscious unless I'm asleep or in the hypnagogic state and that is mostly unconscious or subconscious which has different uses for me. The ranting was just like a vocal emotional purging and that had its own value or purpose to let off steam as it occurred instead of letting it build up and then stabbing people or cutting myself later on. Now the traumatic stories or memories, the tragic storytelling, was also an intuitive way of trying to better preserve my stories. See, every time we tell a story it has the possibility or even likelihood that it will change to some extent. By writing my untold stories once and making them rhyme and delivering them in the same exact way each time helped me to preserve them and safeguard them from the natural mutation that occurs from each retelling. I have often thought about this and wondered about the Iliad and the Odyssey and the importance of rhyme and cadence in the epics not just as memory aids but also as a way of slowing down and



Feb. 15th, 2010 #7,591



hindering the natural mutation that would occur over much longer periods of time. Was that intuitive, or was that consciously knowingly intended? There is something very special about poetry and song that has been vitally important to our advancement as a species. If you look at thought, there are only three kinds of them; identifications, evaluations and judgments. However, those three types of thoughts can happen in three different spaces of time; past, present and future. For example; past judgment, future identification, present evaluation and so on. In total there are only 9 kinds of thoughts. However there is one other event that takes place in our minds that does not fit into those 9 categories that I believe must have had incredible value at some point in our evolution. We see it today as a nuisance or as something of little use but it happens with great frequency. I'm talking about when *a song gets stuck in your head*. I am not sure how we benefited from this but if you sit for an hour and take note of every single kind of thought that enters your brain the appearance and frequency of song is powerful. That alone is not enough to determine its value but put that together with other things like memory aids and preservation of content I can't help but believe that that was something extremely important for us once in our deep past.

**OVK: What does eventually happen when natural mutation is deliberately blocked: art as a cultural artifact ossifies and fossilizes like an insect inside am-**

**ber? Is poetry subjected to natural selection too, the fittest survives?**

**BLS:** Very terrible things. Decoration, marketing, branding, and commercialization. CapitolOne credit cards with Van Gogh's Starry Night painting on them hahahaha! Purposeful mutation is to be exalted I think.

I have no idea. I don't ever think about poetry really. There are different kinds of art but if I replace the word poetry with art of another kind I think natural selection is more of a corporate mass culture selection. Like, "survival of the most popular". But that is not the kind of art I often think about.

**OVK: Is our subjective identity, evaluation and judgment enough to create something artistic? Is everybody therefore a temporarily unrecognized artist?**

**BLS:** Definitely! Potentially, if they use their brains to try and better themselves or others and advance themselves or others in different ways. Everybody can, but not everybody does.

**OVK: "...a song gets stuck in your head."**

**An ear-worm is a melody you can't control. Usually it is a (junk) tune one hums to surrounded by various commercials and ads or tries to ignore when it gets to the front suppressing in fact more pleasant melodies or significant thoughts like a parasite and the more you want to forget it the more itchy it gets. It has a pattern our brain easily identifies and sings along, so it is not really a song, but a twist in our brain that works in a repeat mode till it is numb. Definitely it**



**has a powerful effect, especially when you can't recollect the title and become upset or nervous. Likewise we are unconsciously so happy when a favorite tune is repeated as if repetition itself gives us something special. In your poetry there are certain markers that might be classified as refrains that work as ear-worms to solidify the contemplating experience I suppose.**

**7. OVK: Somniloquy is a new poetic genre initiated by you. Will you explain its stages and eventual cathartic state you are aspiring to achieve writing in your dreams?**

**BLS:** It began by my trying to document my dreams more faithfully and efficiently. I knew bad things were happening in my sleep but I seldom remembered what it was. Upon awaking I could never write down much information before I started forgetting all of it so I started sleeping with a handheld cassette recorder. Upon awaking I could push the button and speak. Speaking the information was much more immediate and so much more conducive to documentation. Over time I became obsessed and would awake 4 times a night and record each dream. This led to accidentally conditioning myself to talk in my sleep and other interesting things. Eventually I began to record so much of the dream experience from both inside and outside of it that it was mind blowing that all of this was taking place without me knowing it. I had troubled or disturbed sleep, nightmares but I never remembered

them. I might only remember an object or something but once I started recording entire dreams with conversations and descriptions and everything from before, during and after awaking I did get some relief but I cannot say anything about the causation. Just having all of that extra information did give me a way to be more objective about my sleep state though.

**8. OVK: Contemporary American poetry has much based on Beat Generation movement of the 1950s and confessional poetry of the same period. Allen Ginsburg and Sylvia Plath come to mind respectively as leading American poets of the previous decades, whereas your poetry seems to combine two contradictory approaches to generate a new ambivalent quality: an active protest and passive contemplation. In what way do you represent modern American 'weary' Beat and declaration of intimacy via confession?**

**BLS:** I have no idea. I have 2 William S. Burroughs CDs that I like but I've never really read any of his stuff or any of the beat poetry. I really don't like poetry at all to be honest with you. I like the idea of it much more than I like hearing it or reading it. Hip hop is different. I love hip hop but I especially don't like slam poetry, poetry sports or rules of any kind. When I think of "real poetry" today, I would only think of rappers and then I would go back to the dirty Greeks like Hipponax. I love Hipponax. Everything else between rap and Hipponax is difficult for me to associate with my own life expe-

rience. Lydia Lunch and Steven Jesse Bernstein and a couple of others excluded of course...

**OVK: Hipponax was a master of parody and mock-epic intentionally using vulgar or obscene medium to gash literate and artistic fornication through. Is there any sphere of life you are specifically sarcastic, burlesque and grotesque?**

**BLS:** Oh I am no stranger to the disgusting. Many believe that disgust is a uniquely human emotion separating us from other animals. Sometimes I think that in order to advance humankind you should know what humankind is and so besides the fact that I am innately curious about disgusting things I also feel like one way of adding to humanity is to explore the things that make us special. To expound upon those qualities or features. So for example if I read a book about how humans alone have the ability to experience disgust I will explore that more and try to be even more disgusting.

**OVK: "The difference between me and other poets is that I am really a spider" or "If you dare condemn my life it will come after you with a sharpened rake", said Steven Jesse Bernstein. Curating a museum in his memory is your tribute to another obscure American poet you seem to share common artistic grounds with, don't you? Self-loathing, aggressive, grunge and yet so visually insightful his persona still remains a mystery.**

**BLS:** I identify with him quite a bit and he is known for saying that he was "secretly important" and so the

mission of the museum is to make him openly important. He should be taught in schools he should be required reading.

**9. OVK: Opium-induced English Romantic poets of the XIX c. used drugs to stimulate their visionary scope of boundless imagination. Experimenting with hallucinogen or recreational drugs in the XX c. was a part of absolute freedom manifesto. You have been using hard drugs that are in fact considered to be dangerous and lethal. If not addicted but to some extent you seem to pursue the same goals as the above-mentioned poets to diversify your poetic experience and irreversibly modify your mental condition, do you?**

**BLS:** I have not done this for poetry at all. I have not done this to experiment with language for any of the verbal arts at all. When I do drug experiments I am often totally silent in a silent environment and I do them solely for the purpose of drawing. I can draw, translate physical experiences with marks and colors and shapes, faster than I can think. Because when I think with words about my physical sensations it is a much slower process and so less information can be recorded or channeled. The reason I experiment with drugs is the same reason why I experiment with the senses. I want to alter the experiences of consciousness and not for creating and accumulating different "states" of consciousness but instead the process is about the "altering", the opening up, the broadening,

the expanding of these states. It is like the old saying we have about life, "It is not about what you have but what you do."

**10. OVK: You are often cited as a founder of the 'stand-up tragedy' as a reaction to its comic counterpart. Can your poetry be viewed as a meta-theater where several genres, like poetry and drama, fuse or collide to reach an ultimate effect? How does genre hybridization help you to cross the conventional literary borders?**

**BLS:** Yes. It is very difficult to make strangers cry especially in the States where crying in public is not acceptable. They have to believe you and they have to be able to identify with what you are talking about and have to be so overwhelmed that they can't help it too. So I had to use many different things to evoke this response; story, music, video and so on. As I said before I really don't know anything about literary stuff or theater or anything. I'm not into all that. I mean I have read books by Dostoevsky and everything but that type of thing for me is more about education and entertainment.

**11. OVK: You have been keeping your artistic diary, or portfolio rather, for the last 23 years drawing a self-portrait every day. Such egocentric attitude of self-scrutiny, idolization might be quite a handicap when dealing with mass society and people in gener-**

**al. Do you totally follow what you preach and an artist and person in you seem to co-exist, dwell as one marginalized phenomenon, or there are mainstream tendencies, pop art influences you tolerate and get along easily?**

**BLS:** I am influenced, we are all influenced by things in our environment. Influenced by things we aren't even consciously aware of. For a long time now people have discussed the mind and the body, but the environment is just as equal. We are physiologically connected to our environments. Our senses are always in direct connection to the outside of us. The things we do, the actions we take are often governed by this connectivity even though we may not be aware of those connections.

We may use the front part of our brain and think and believe that there are other causes for what we do and we are often wrong for what is taking place is often the influence of our environment upon us. That can not be overstated enough. As for the egocentricity of my self-exploration, my "self" is all that I really have access to. It is physically impossible to have this level of access to another. It is not egocentric to study the self, because the things that can be learned about one's self may apply to the other. I do not idolize myself at all. I'm not a person who takes selfies or anything like that. A drawing can contain much more information than a photograph because it is composed of different elements of experience: Focus/attention, valence, arous-



5:45 am 1975 Summer/5560



June 4th, 2005 #5,628

06/04/05 6 years old Ocean City Md, found drowned woman on the beach

## PART I: INTRODUCTION

al and stress. All of those elements can be evident and even be evaluated in a drawing. Each daily-self-portrait contains an enormous amount of data. This is data that I can use to guide my life for the better. Something I can use to stimulate my mind, overcome fears, bring to the surface hidden disturbances, release anxieties and tensions and so much more. It is an incredible act. I am marginalized because I do not fit in with how other people define art I think. I'm not sure but that is what I sometimes think.

**12. OVK: Several times throughout the album you mention the index finger. It has an interesting allusion in religious sphere, in particular with doubting Thomas<sup>1</sup> who buried his finger into Christ's wound to believe stigmata were real or in alchemy where it represents one's relationship with the spiritual world, implicated hope of heaven, spiritual ascent. What does a self-pointing index finger mean in your poetry?**

BLS: Well in the "Social Masochist" poem it is a red string tied to an index finger which is something people used to do to help remember things in the cartoons. People would tie a string to their finger so they would remember to get milk or something. It is an old fashioned memory aid. I know in my drawing I trace my index finger sometimes on the page because to me it can stand in for the finger of God. It could be many

<sup>1</sup> Gospel of John, The King James Version text (John 20:25): *Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.*

things though. In “Promethazine” the index finger is used as a way to make someone puke. You stick your finger down your throat in order to vomit it all out. And in “If My Mother and I Were Monkeys” the index finger is how my mom would try to tickle me when she was drunk. She would wiggle/bend one index finger really fast and steadily and it was a scary tickling.

## TORTURE EXPERIMENT

*(drawings by Bryan Lewis Saunders)*

**BLS:** I did the torture experiment with John Duncan because I wanted to prepare myself in case it ever happened to me. The police in TN near where I live tortured a man really badly and went to jail briefly. I was also seeing people in Syria being tortured on YouTube almost daily so I decided to see how far I could prepare myself in case I was ever tortured.

**OVK:** Torture might seem to be shocking but in fact it is routine, at least it is a common part of our consciousness and few things do really make us horror-stricken. Mass media, virtual games, world catastrophes have multiplied the acts of torture to such extent that our brains ignore them, mark as commercials not to pay attention to. Yet torture when described in detail has always represented an act of force or superiority and, surprisingly, intelligence. Reproducing acts of torture in art is an intelligent way to deal with the problem, eradicating it. Most people are squeamish and faint-hearted when it comes to look at something painful not to be identified oneself with, let alone experience that kind of pain. Bryan Lewis Saunders, on the contrary, seems to create a particular problem for oneself to go through torture and examine it in a minute detail like a nomad in Chöd practice observing something frightening on the charnel grounds performing a spiritual act of self-sacrifice to “cut through”.



## ASSIGNMENTS FOR STUDENTS 2

### Lead-In Activity

1. How often are you in pain?
2. Which pain do you consider more unbearable: emotional or physical? Is it the same about torture?
3. Why do you think some people torture themselves? What kind of gratification do they get?

### Analysis

Make a survey about literary descriptions of torture, for example in "1984" (Winston Smith's torture) or "The Scarlet Letter" (Arthur Dimmesdale's self-torture) novels and compare them to real (alleged) acts of torture executed by Bryan Lewis Saunders, for instance:

*"I hurt people that don't deserve it" from "THE SOCIAL MASOCHIST";*

*"PUUHH" ! / That's the sound my testicle makes / When I stick needles in it to intimidate / The other "Bad People" from "HIDE AND PLAY DEAD";*

*"My body needs another hole" from "PROMETHAZINE";*

*"So every few years or so, one of my lungs explodes and it just depends on who I'm with or where I'm at, if I'll survive the next pneumo-thorax" from "IF I WAS A CAT -";*

*"WHOEVER DOES THE TORTURE / IS SUPPOSED TO BE THE ONE AVOIDING THE ANIMAL'S EYES" from*

*"I QUIT!";*

*"I am one fucked up old man sick pup / That's drunk too much / And disgusted myself to the point that I now suffer from / Chronic vomit reflux" from "DEATH OF A LOSER";*

*"I'm found dead / With a self-inflicted plastic grocery bag / Duct-taped around my bloated head"; "Ever since i hurt my penis it's been getting smaller and smaller. And I'm afraid that one day it will completely go away and I won't even have one at all or, just a calcified urethra and nobody will love me because nobody could love that either" from "MY DEEPEST DARKEST FEARS".*

Examine the front cover (or pick up any auto-portrait) featured in this issue #1 and explain its torturous content.

Bryan Lewis Saunders works as a self-trained neuroscientist who assumes well how brain reacts to extreme conditions like starvation or sleep deprivation, when stress creates an alternative state of mind, but the question remains whether it is productive? Can we rely on data obtained from torture or they are counter-productive (like a confession you get after torture only because you or other person was in pain and gave in)?

### Lead-Out Activity

Write a torture act. Think about the following tips:

1. Setting. Set up a torture scene which is not stereotypical.

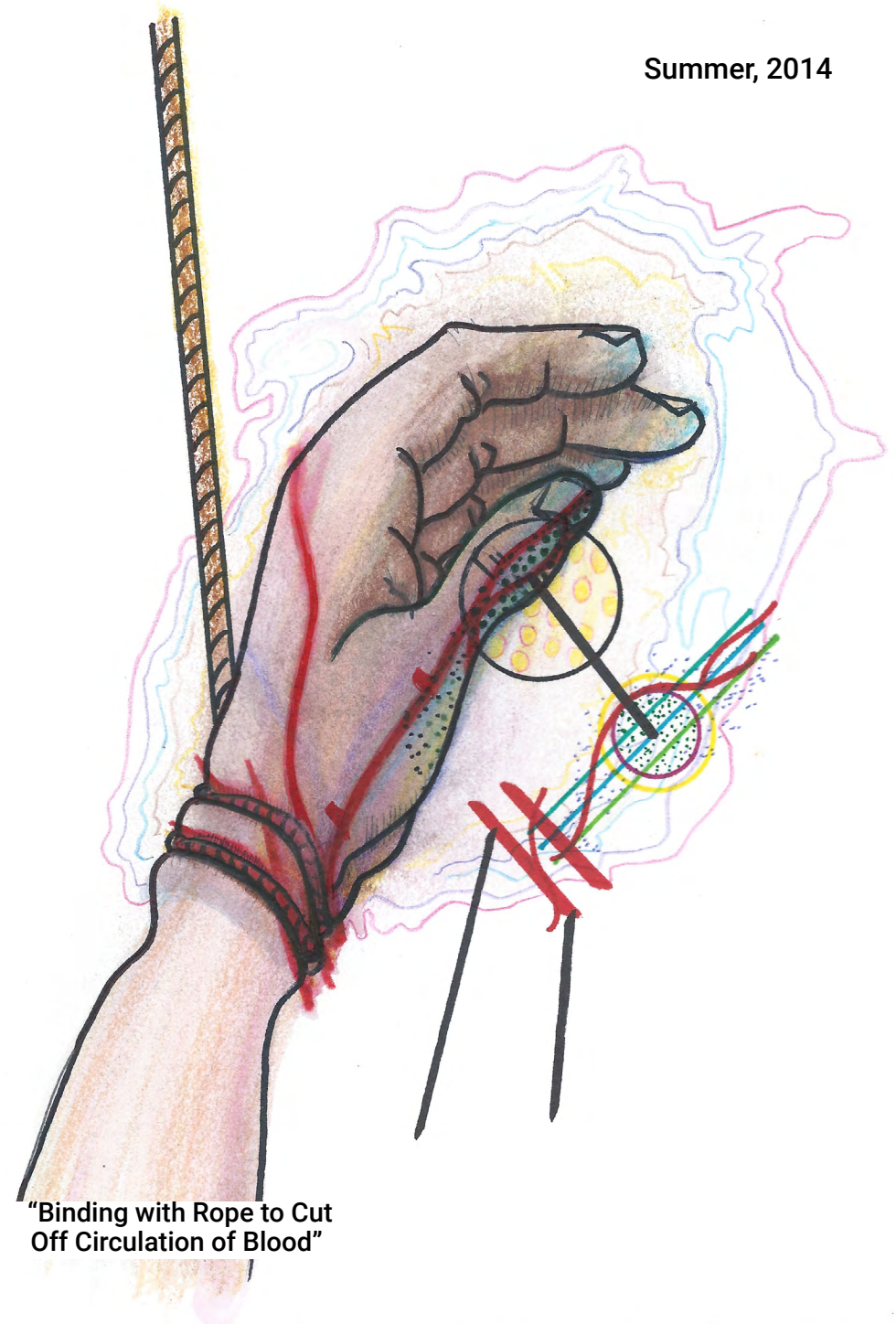
Summer, 2014



"While Being Tortured:  
C-Clamp on Big Toe"

C-clamp on big toe

Summer, 2014



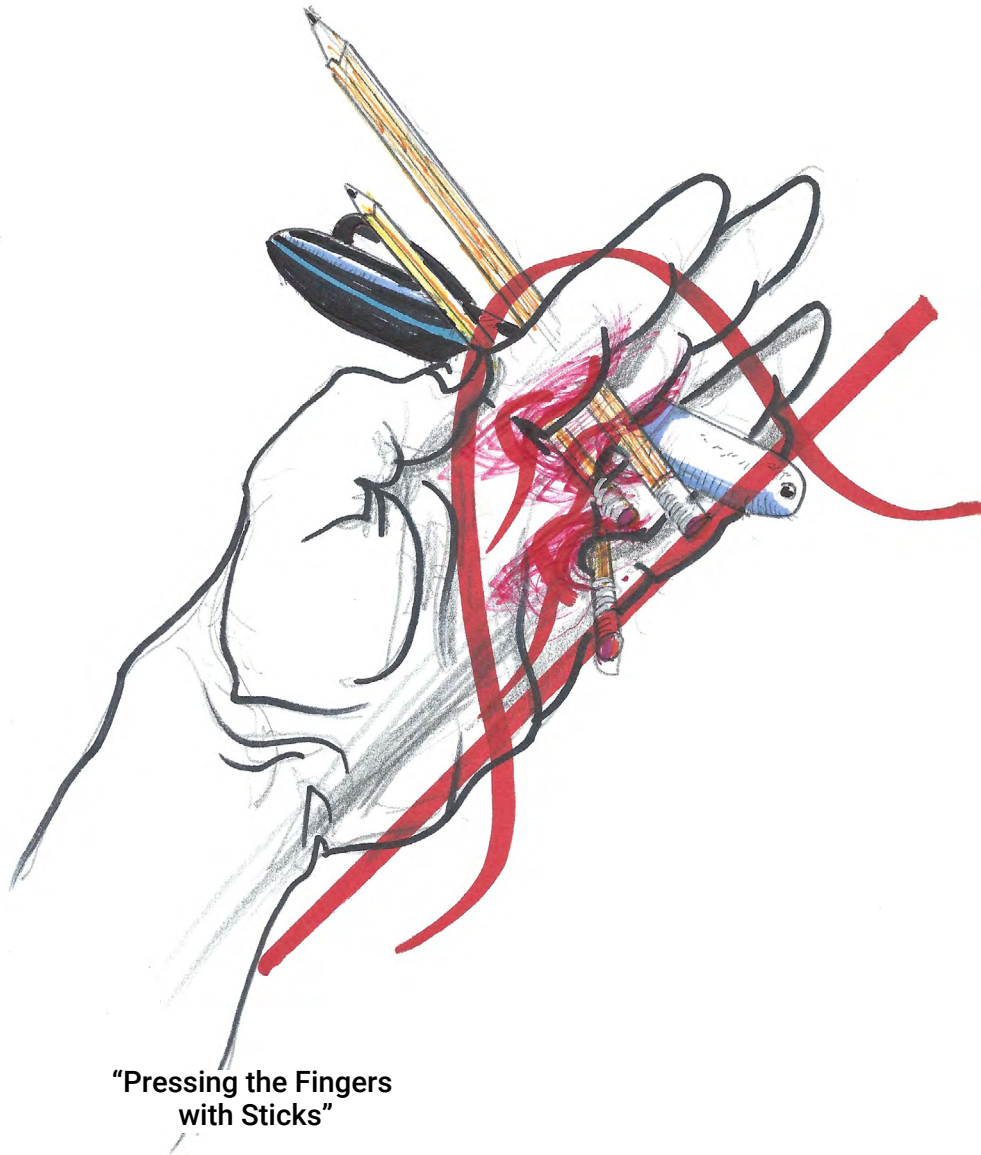
"Binding with Rope to Cut  
Off Circulation of Blood"

Binding with rope to cut off circulation of blood



Pressing the fingers with sticks (pencils & magic marker)

Summer, 2014



"Pressing the Fingers  
with Sticks"

March 20th 1997 #907



"Under the Influence:  
Morphine IV"



January 2018

2. Profile. Define a psychological profile of your character (age, gender, occupation). What are the motives (or none) your character is (self-) torturing somebody? Think about a split personality character as well. How much do their desires and actions differ?

3. Memory. Think about a possible reason of the character's need for torture from the past. How does this inclination evolve with time into present?

4. Location. Where does torture take place?

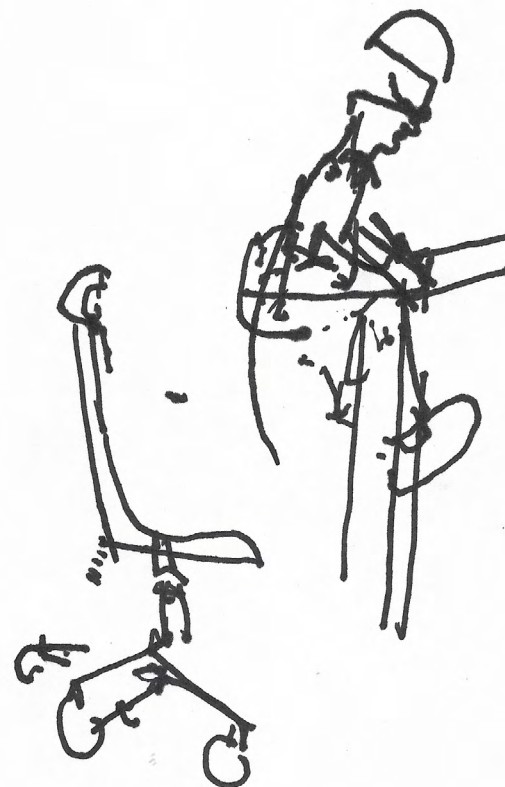
5. Type of torture. Choose between physical torture (physical harm, an injury to the physical body, electric shock, stabbing, burning, injections, kidnapping, ect.) or emotional torture (threatening through fear, paranoia, etc.) and describe your victim using vivid visual or abstract words respectively.

6. Character's behavior. Is there any sense of remorse or guilt or only cold-blooded indifference?

Now answer the final question:

7. Does your torture end in death or it is a never-ending cycle?

Act as a self-therapist and explain your torture act.



"30 Days Totally Blind: Day 11

My drawing mistakes so if I made on

any mistakes I cannot try to correct them or present them Day 11

January 2018



"30 Days Totally Blind: Day 28"

of a car and walking across a time  
 + in parking lot can be like stepping into the ocean Day 28

## PART II: ANALYSIS

*The Analyses of Bryan Lewis Saunders's poetry by the post-graduate students of a 2018/2019 academic year (the Institute of Foreign Philology, Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University, Ukraine)*

### "I AM A VULTURE"

*by Bryan Lewis Saunders*

*Music by Joachim Montessuis*

I am a vulture  
 Guardian  
 Avenger  
 Smelling death and decay from miles away  
 Feeding off of the dead  
 To purify the environment  
 I shit on my own self  
 To bake the bacteria off  
 And can stomach almost anything  
 Descendant of the Griffin  
 And a living lesson  
 That all hardship is temporary  
 And necessary  
 For a higher purpose  
 Beholder of the eyeball's of victims  
 A VULTURE  
 A HERO FOR TODAY'S  
 RANK  
 PUTRID  
 ROTTING  
 CULTURE





November 16th, 2007 #6,635

11/16/07

11-18-07 last minute stress



November 18th, 2007 #6,637



**"THE MEANING OF LIFE"***by Bryan Lewis Saunders**Music by Tracy Lee Summers*

Look at the Earth  
 And it's relationship to the Universe  
 And it appears as nothing more  
 Than a used unplugged refrigerator  
 With a closed door  
 A warm, damp, isolated environment  
 Ripe for the growth of disparate spores

We, are the Kudzu of the animal kingdom  
 The M.R.S.A  
 MERSA  
 (Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus)  
 Of backboneed organisms  
 A weed  
 An incurable disease  
 A triviality  
 An anomaly  
 A fluke

And because we are alive, living and a part of life  
 It is arrogant, egocentric, and biased  
 To believe that life is important  
 Of course life is going to cherish and embrace it-  
 self

It's in the very nature of nature to flourish  
 But 99.9999999 repeated forever percent  
 Of the entire Universe is lethally hostile towards it  
 Much less supportive of it  
 This makes life special  
 But it doesn't make it good, sacred or even pre-  
 cious  
 Just insignificant at best

Life  
 If nothing outside of it  
 Besides itself  
 Desires it  
 Does it even have true value?

We are self aware  
 But ignorant of our origin  
 Searching desperately for missing links  
 And filling in the blanks with fiction  
 Constantly questioning the obvious  
 Oblivious to our own ignorance  
 Once we see we come from scum  
 We deny it and return to faith  
 I have little respect for hardly anyone  
 We are weak and stupid, useless, human refuse,  
 moldy waste  
 Put here, solely by luck  
 and the simple fact that  
 IT FEELS REALLY GREAT  
 WHEN WE FUCK

*RM (Ruslana Marusevych):*

Having read and listened to the whole collection of your poems “Near Death Experience” (what I did during one evening because it was difficult to stop but sometimes I just had to stop to catch my breath) I was particularly impressed by the poems entitled “The Meaning of Life” and “I am a Vulture”, which seemed to me accomplished and harmonious in their manifestation of the main themes and their highly acute form. In fact, the former poem, firstly, made me smile, and secondly, made me think for quite a while. And the latter one made me shiver and feel as a rabbit in front of a constrictor. As a matter of fact, I was deeply affected and quite taken aback in the best sense of its word by all the poems. I was constantly thinking about their sense and accomplishment, and being faced with the task of analyzing one or at best some of them (because analyzing all of the poems would be an unaffordable task for my poor brain) I decided to let my subconscious work for me, process everything and let me choose a poem for analysis unexpectedly.

And so, after a week spent in the blissful inactivity of the mind, one idea suddenly struck me. Perhaps, these are just my otiose delusions, albeit I would like to share them with you. In addition, the concept of the death of the author has not been forgotten yet, therefore I hope that you will have fun reading my claiming as a literary critic.



May 17th, 1999 #2,204



The first decision is the best decision, and so eventually I stopped at the poems that greatly impressed me during the first reading. The poems "The Meaning of Life" and "I am a Vulture" seem to me a complement and a continuation of one another. Although being absolutely different in their form and tone, the aforementioned poems address a sole theme and problem, that is the question of the meaning of our existence.

Sigmund Freud's theory of drives contains a concept of Eros and Thanatos – life instincts and death instincts which rule human behavior. To my mind, we can draw a parallel between the above-mentioned poems and Freud's concepts. To this regard, we can conclude that the poem "The Meaning of Life" represents the life instincts, while "I am a Vulture" represents the death instincts. In the former poem the narrator expresses his understanding of the world and life, his thoughts about humans and their role in the Universe, and comes to the conclusion about the only aim of human existence being indulgence to sexual contact since it feels great, therefore, we can say that he is driven by the life instincts, no matter how paradoxically it sounds in the context of the poem. In the latter poem, respectively, the narrator has got his own point of view concerning life sense, and his thought differs completely from the one described in "The meaning of life", since he considers human culture and, therefore, society to be rotting, and deems death and destruction the true meaning of life, even calling himself "A HERO FOR / TODAY'S

/ RANK / PUTRID / ROTTING / CULTURE". Hence, we can conclude him being driven by the death instincts (which is quite obvious).

The narrator in both poems might be one person. In both cases the narrators believe in nothing and deem life meaningless. The language of "The Meaning of Life" is more direct and simple, and the narrator simply states that "*...it doesn't make it [life] good, sacred or even precious / Just insignificant at best*". In "I am a Vulture" the statement about the senselessness of the human life is veiled. Still, in the lines "*Descendant of the Griffin / And a living lesson / That all hardship is temporary / And necessary / For a higher purpose*", with an apparent irony, the narrator implies that the purpose of life is to die and rot, therefore, life has no higher purpose at all. The narrators in both the poems are skeptical and free from any restraint, which makes them quite similar and contributes to the idea of the correlation between the poems.

This correlation is also expressed verbally in the form of a metaphor. The striking image of the world as a "*...used unplugged refrigerator / With a closed door/ A warm, damp, isolated environment / Ripe for the growth of disparate spores*" creates an association with something rotten, swollen, and slippery, which immediately calls upon an image of a vulture. And respectively, the lines "*I shit on my own self / To bake the bacteria off*" suggest a link to "The Meaning of Life", since humans in the latter are called "Methicillin Resistant Staphylo-

*coccus Aureus*". Accordingly, the two aforementioned poems contain similar images of human, comparing people to "a weed / An incurable disease / A triviality / An anomaly / A fluke" in "The Meaning of Life", and calling them victims and applying such epithets as "rotten", "rank", and "putrid" in "I am a Vulture".

I would especially like to dwell upon the sole form of the poems, since I consider it highly harmonious and suitable to the content, which is, in my humble opinion, a trademark of a great writing. Before listening to the CD with poems, I read the booklet, wanting to create the first impression with my "inner reader", and then compare it with the way the poems should be recited. Reading "The Meaning of Life", I was stricken by the excellence of its form. The poem is written in a blank verse and, what's interesting, part of it is in fact rhymed. I am talking about the last stanza. As the poem progresses, we see its form changes from the blank, unrhymed lines to more and more delicate and accomplished verse (a great example of which is the melodic line "...And because we are alive, living and a part of life..." in the middle of the poem), followed by the last two lines, written in capital letters, which, just like couplets in the Shakespearean sonnet, create an effect of explosion, releasing the whole meaning of the poem (and the meaning of life), throwing it to the reader's face, which has a hint of a discharge. To such respect, the form and the rapidity of the poem with its slow beginning, increasing skill in the terms of the rhyme as the

poem progresses and comes to an end, and a sudden release of the main thought in the two last lines creates in one's mind an association with a sexual intercourse, which makes a poem truly ingenious since its idea and form coincide. Nevertheless, having listened to the poem recited by you, I cannot help admitting to its deliberate tone which creates the opposite effect to that coming to one's mind when the poem is read. The tone created here is ironical, and the background music contributes to the effect of contradiction between what is being said and how it is being said.

Speaking about "I am a Vulture", it is worthwhile saying that its form and tone contribute to the dark and threatening atmosphere of the poem. The slow manner of reciting and the background music, along with the repetition of the phrase "I am a vulture" at the beginning and at the end of the poem, and multiple images of death, decay, and rotting create a hypnotizing effect on the reader / listener and make them feel anxious and scared, what, in fact, happened to me.

To sum it all up, I dare repeat my point of view by saying that the poems "The Meaning of Life" and "I am a Vulture" has a similar subject and can be considered as a complement and a continuation of one another. The poems describe the drives to life (embodied in love) and destruction, which are pervasive to all the human kind and which rule our existence. If we think about it more carefully, the whole life of people circles around these two impulses. These two motives

are major in all our actions, whether we realize it or not. We are apt to “cherish and embrace” our life, since it’s in our nature, and at the same time the urge to destroy roots deep in our essence. But do these two impulses combine, and if yes, when? Because if we agree on Eros and Thanatos being an essence, “a meaning” of life (I put inverted commas because it sounds too pretentious), then the combination of the two of them will be the answer (there is no answer apparently, but let me play in a sage for the art’s sake). So, continuing the flow of my thought, what can make a person experience a desire for love (physical or spiritual) and destruction at the same time? My variant is: an unrequited love. Just think about it. When you love a person who has no feelings for you in return, obviously this person is an object of your desire, life in itself. But have you ever loved something so much that you wanted to destroy it just in order for it not to torture you anymore? Or have you ever wanted to destroy yourself in order not to feel pain? To my mind, that’s Eros and Thanatos in their best manifestation of integrity.

But what do I really think about it? All the sufferings and heartaches described by me above, even if they feel intense sometimes, can’t stand any comparison to the sufferings which innocent animals have to bear from the hand of a human every single day, that’s why I consider “I QUIT” to be the most accomplished and ingenious poem. But animals suffer not only in laboratories and not solely for the sake of feeding one’s

family or saving one’s life. There is also animal cruelty for the art’s sake, like in Andrei Tarkovsky’s movie “Andrei Rublev” where a horse was killed on set and the process was filmed. Therefore I dare to ask you a question: can we accept the notion of cruelty for the art’s sake? And can we call something “art” if it was created with cruelty?

P.S. I know, my question has nothing to do with my review, but it wouldn’t be very wise to ask about the meaning of life, plus it’s something that really interests me and I would like to hear the point of view of a man of art who you are.

**BLS:** Thanks for the wonderful and incredibly thoughtful letter! I really appreciate that! Anyone can call anything art. It has been like that for about 50 years now I think maybe even longer.

I don’t particularly like cruelty. You must know of Antonin Artaud? He is the first artist that immediately comes to mind when I think of cruelty. I like Antonin Artaud and I like his ideas about theatre and the theatre of cruelty. I love his attacks on Shakespeare and also his descriptions of Van Gogh’s final painting and I also love his magic spell letters and his “Fragments from a Journal in Hell” and also the critiques of the mental health system. I like him a lot! I don’t like cruelty though. Cruelty for the sake of art is bad. I can not think of a good enough excuse to be purposefully cruel. Wait, the artist and Mudman Kim Jones set some mice on fire once and screamed with the mice while



they burned alive. That was cruel, and I can totally understand why he did it, but cruel artistic incidents like that (that I can fully understand) are very VERY few. If there is any real cruelty in a work of art, (not just an illustration or image of it etc.) for me personally to be ok with it I feel that there must be some greater purpose for the cruelty that far outweighs the loss of morality in that lone act.

OVK: "...Yet each man kills the thing he loves, / By each let this be heard, / Some do it with a bitter look, / Some with a flattering word, / The coward does it with a kiss, / The brave man with a sword! / Some kill their love when they are young, / And some when they are old; / Some strangle with the hands of Lust, / Some with the hands of Gold: / The kindest use a knife, because / The dead so soon grow cold. / Some love too little, some too long, / Some sell, and others buy; / Some do the deed with many tears, / And some without a sigh: / For each man kills the thing he loves, / Yet each man does not die." *Oscar Wilde, an extract from "The Ballad of Reading Gaol", 1897.*

**RM: But have you ever loved something so much that you wanted to destroy it just in order for it not to torture you anymore?**

**BLS:** One time after I discovered that my girlfriend had been cheating on me with her boss. She was crying in the bedroom and I went and got a knife from the kitchen drawer and said, "See this knife? Look at this knife! Look at this knife!" and she looked at it and said,

"Oh god. You aren't going to hurt me are you?" and she was crying really hard in the fetal position. And I said, "No. I'm not going to hurt you." And then she said, "Oh god. You aren't going to hurt yourself are you?" and I said, "No. I'm not going to hurt myself." Then I said, "Do you see this knife? Look at this knife! It feels like you just cut my heart out with this fucking knife!" And then I went and put it back in the kitchen drawer. I did not threaten her with it I did not want to kill her or myself, but later that night I had a few beers and some Japanese rice wine and stabbed a young man on the streets of Washington D.C.. with a different knife. That is why I believe expression is better than suppression.

**RM: Or have you ever wanted to destroy yourself in order not to feel pain?**

**BLS:** I'm sure it has crossed my mind but I do not recall specific incidents. When I had an appendicitis the pain was near suicidal in strength and when I had a kidney stone stuck in my ureter once it was near suicidal in strength too but not quite strong enough to want to kill myself. I used to have psychosomatic stomach pains that made me feel like harming others. There is a fine line between hurting oneself and hurting others. There is a fine line between homicide and suicide. I was the type of child that would be more inclined to murder than to kill myself. In fact my mother slept with her door locked out of fear that I would murder her in her sleep. Education and art have helped me so much. I really can't say enough how much daily-self-portrai-

ture has enhanced my life for the better. These issues no longer present.

**RM:** Can we accept the notion of cruelty for the art's sake?

**BLS:** No. Only in specific extremely rare individual cases.

**RM:** If we continue thinking about unrequited love and the instincts it arises in us, as well as about the notion of love in our life, we arrive at the conclusion about the distorted understanding of love in our society. Indeed, if we take the ideal of love acceptable and praised by our contemporaries and look at it with all the scrutiny of an imaginary grey-bearded man of science, we observe something which reminds a burden, and it feels quite puritan in the worst sense of this word. The notion of love as a possession and obligation distorts its nature. What is called love in our society can be killed by a great amount of different things. Oscar Wilde in the famous extract from "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" claims that "... each man kills the thing he loves..." and enumerates a number of reasons that can kill love, from bitter look to lust. But all this is solely due to our prejudices and predispositions. We are used to treat love as a wild animal. We think that a man should tame it just like he did with every other creature appearing on his way. And it only leads to suffering and disappointment.

And taking into account the point of view that we "*come from scum*" and we are "*weak and stupid*,"

*useless, human refuse, moldy waste / Put here, solely by luck*", does it sound really wise to doom yourself to senseless suffering, distorting the nature of what should bring us joy? To this regard, unrequited love can be considered not only as a perfect example of a mixture of Eros and Thanatos but also a great starting point to the understanding of love, since it demands nothing, asks for nothing, and promises nothing. Of course, it is distorted to some degree as well, since it often comes with jealousy, doubt, and hopelessness, but it lets us regard our beloved creature as something more than "*moldy waste*", it gets us higher from being plain consumers (since we consume not only things but "love" as well). This experience is a great starting point because an object of love at a distance seems to be something extraterrestrial, and allows us to experience a broader and higher palette of emotions. Still, it shouldn't be that way, the deification of another and humiliation of oneself is not identical with love, but one needs to start somewhere. The narrator in "The Meaning of Life" says that we are "*Constantly questioning the obvious / Oblivious to our own ignorance*" implying that we sought to find a meaning of our existence in the things that have no sense like religion or fiction. But the last two lines suggest a kind of an offer (we can look at it that way, screwing up one eye and murmuring excuses to Mr. Saunders), and it lies not solely in mating as it is. In my humble opinion, a simple thing that can make human life more bearable and this tiny extension



Sept. 22nd, 2002 #4,411

of existence more pleasant is that people should put their heads up from the ego inscribed deeply in their essence and view love not as a means of possession, but as a means of interconnection with another being without attempts on changing them or making them your property. To this regard, love implicates a sincere observation, a complete acceptance of another person, and, in case it is not unshared, without any claim of possession you become united, dissolve yourself in each other, and it may be called a destruction of personality. But once a person experiences it, there is no way to talk about personality because true love paradoxically unites individuality and its destruction, not excluding or diminishing any of the both notions. And in case of an unrequited love, the drive to destruction and self-destruction comes from a perverse desire of possession imposed by the traditions and values of a society we live in. Still, we experience it, but we can use this force as an inspiration and a starting point for viewing love differently, because "expression is better than suppression". Sounds pretty hippie and rather idealistic, but in the chaotic world which appeared due to an apparent coincidence, there must be something not tamed and imposed to a feigned comprehension, and that 'something' is love as I understand it. It is chaotic in its perfection and perfect in its chaos. And most importantly, if we look at it from a distance, love, just like everything else in this world, doesn't have any high purpose and leads to nothing in particular (or, if one is



still into a search for the meaning, it leads to a higher purpose described in “I am a Vulture”). But, amusingly and plainly, it gives us a meaning while we are alive and feel it. Now isn’t it desirable in the least?

To sum this little distraction up, I must pay tribute to the unlimited space for reader’s interpretations that “Near Death Experience” gives. Because, I’ll quote one of my teachers, “once a literary work goes beyond its semantic content and enters into the category of broad meaning, it touches upon individual and general” and provides a reader with a deep, but still universal experience, what makes literature, and poetry in particular, so valuable.

RM: I’ve read “The Beach” and I would like to take a chance and ask you some more questions. I want to apologize beforehand for my questions being rather hectic, I am just overcome with impressions but don’t want to take too much of your time by making you read more analyses.

You know, my father was in prison when I was a kid. And then he left us and I have nothing to remind myself about him. It sounds weird but when I read your poems, for example, “The Beach” or any other, I kind of get a feeling of a connection to something I have lost without even having it (sounds really weird, but I mean my father and not a prison). Speaking about “The Beach”, if we try to interpret it from the point of view of existentialism, and expand the space of prison in our mind and project it on the world as we know it,

we’ll find out that the prison could be interpreted as a metaphor of human existence. And to this regard, your poem can be considered as The Bible for all the *survivors survivin’*. But, apart from everything, all of your poems have a really great impact on their reader (me writing this at 3:19AM is a proof), and I had a chance to read your answer to another student (I act as an intermediary sometimes, also she asked me to read her analysis so I hope there’s no privacy breach) where you wrote that you used your poetry as a therapy. But do you consider this influential aspect or is it rather a bonus to a therapeutic effect the art gives? I mean, a poet should not a priori consider or bother about any side effect his art produces, but I am just curious whether you are inclined to think about it sometimes?

Also there is a computer game called “The Sims”. The thing about it is that you can basically play in God there, create cities, families and their houses, build stories. And make those characters happy or make them suffer. That’s what I did. Just because I was a kid, bored and curious. Therefore, maybe a *subject in question* is just a child who plays a game? Or an adult who has a developmental delay? Like in a song by Death in June, “He’s Disabled”. But maybe having no god and knowing that there is no god is better than if he was schizophrenic? Maybe being given in to mercy of fate and screwing everything up by yourself (as humanity is showing a bright success at) is better than being tortured by some creature who has planned some strange

plan?

And one more question, rather concerning a form and a process of writing. A lot of your poems are analyzed by me and my fellow students as being written in the stream of consciousness technique. Therefore the question is: do you write on the spot without further editing or do you review maybe a choice of words or other aspects afterwards?

**BLS** (addressing OVK): I am in shock at how this album seems to be affecting them. It is really wonderful and beyond words. I can't thank them enough for sharing so much with me. You have an incredible class! Really wonderful students.

**RM: But do you consider this an influential aspect or is it rather a bonus to a therapeutic effect the art gives?**

**BLS:** Oh no, therapy is most certainly an influential aspect. If there was no healing to be had from the art of writing and performing I would never have even engaged in it to begin with. There are other influential aspects too. A few times immediately after performing my words I have experienced a great grandiosity, an ultimate supreme euphoria. Sometimes I want it to happen again but it is very rare. It is such an amazing feeling, but I have very little control over when it happens. I have felt this feeling once when I was released from prison and I felt it again when I was released from a state mental hospital, so originally I believed this feeling could only be experienced upon release from

long term tremendous environmental stress. Then I experienced it several times immediately after a spoken word performance. I always want it to happen but it very rarely does. I would say it happens about 3% to 4% of the time. It is like I become possessed during the performance and then afterward I am glowing, my skin is yellow or radiating glowing gold, and I have an extreme sense of mental and physical arousal. I just start walking and believe that I can walk any distance, like 88 miles or even across the entire country for example. The time of the world activity around me slows to a near stop but many mental events take place at a very fast pace and I feel that I am the most alive I have ever been in this moment. I never performed solely to make that happen but I always hope that it does. It is a very powerful good feeling.

**RM: I mean, a poet should not a priori consider or bother about any side effect his art produces, but I am just curious whether you are inclined to think about it sometimes?**

**BLS:** I think the artist should think about effects. If my art was partially responsible for some children setting themselves on fire, I would a priori consider that when making more art. Nothing bad can come from consideration and reflection. In fact it is in those moments of reflection that purpose and meaning can be created and also within those moments where learning can take place.

**RM: But maybe having no god and knowing that**



Oct. 5th, 1999 #2,571

"Made by Punching the  
Paper with a Bloody Fist"

**there is no god is better than if he was schizophrenic? Maybe being given in to the mercy of fate and screwing everything up by yourself (as humanity is showing a bright success at) is better than being tortured by some creature who has planned some strange plan?**

**BLS:** I wrote that as a reaction to my Christian environment and my psychological environment. Young people around me would argue to no end that there is a god there is no god there is a god there is no god ad infinitum. And at the same time I was being diagnosed with various psychotic disorders. So I wrote that to let people know that if god is real and the way Christians describe him to be he is absolutely psychotic according to the DSMV psychological diagnostic manual and he needs to be taking his medicine because he is not treating his symptoms. I had a very scary supernatural experience performing that poem once. I also always wanted to learn how to do the magic trick where someone disappears into thin air and get really good at making myself disappear so that one night I could perform that poem and right in the middle of the most blasphemous part saying "strike me down! judge me now! Fuck you god!" POOF I would disappear in front of the audience and change their brains forever.

**RM:** A lot of your poems are analyzed by me and my fellow students as being written in the stream of consciousness technique. Therefore the question is: do you write on the spot without further editing or do you review maybe a choice of words or other aspects



**afterwards?**

**BLS:** Well I only wrote words to be spoken, so the only way those words would change would be if my brain discovered a way to speak them better. Like if I was saying the same sentence/idea 30 times in a row and then my brain spontaneously changed something in order for it to be better sounding, or a better rhythm, or a better more clearly defined way of saying something, or a better rhyme... If during that repetition something happened spontaneously/naturally and if I felt that that change was "better" I would keep it and make it a permanent change. Once I begin performing that piece it is at a point where there are no more changes to be had. Only once or twice have changes occurred naturally while reciting it live. Once I have repeated these lines hundreds maybe thousands of times nothing better will naturally arise from that repetition. That is why I like crescendo so much and the idea of motor vehicle gears in the creation and delivery of the words. Because the way I create many of them is by way of a forced repetition like the pistons of a car engine. I just say the same thought over and over again as if in 1st gear and then when a new thought bursts out it is an increase in mental dynamics and I try to go into second gear. I try to apply mental, emotional and vocal force to that change to increase the gear. It does not always happen, sometimes it stays in 1st gear the whole time... But sometimes after repeating the first and second thoughts over and over again

with that force applied, the poem the second gear can happen or be sustained and same with when the third thought emerges and I apply vocal force and focus of thought to deliver it in third gear. Memory adds to the speed and efficiency of the repetition and when that pattern grows it can keep going like this for a long time sometimes. It's kind of a cool process. I am drawn to it because it leaps naturally out of my brain but is not freestyle or improv it is well rehearsed if that makes sense. I hesitate to call it a stream of conscious process because it is not really a stream like that. But like I said before that is only one method I use when writing.

**JK (Julia Klymovych):**

To write a review one should firstly try the product to get some impression. So, what can an ordinary girl do to understand the Saunders' product? To change perspective? To think critically? To get access to my subconscious... somehow? "The Meaning of Life" for me personally is a truthful reflection of our lives, because we are still ignorant of our origin so that we cannot predict our future and we cannot find the aim of our being here. The main question here: What is this life given for? Neither you nor me can answer it, because there's no operating instruction to this refrigerator. What a clever producer made it and sold it to us!

Different people – different interpretations of life. For some of them life is fighting, we fight for justice, for love, for money, and it ends only when we die physical-

ly. For others life is just killing time, and they die faster... spiritually. So, the result is the same – death. And only the period of time, called life, makes sense for us, because as long as we are a part of life we are alive, but it doesn't mean that life is important. Being alive is important, like the basic instinct of a rational creature. *"Once we see we come from scum / We deny it and return to faith"*. All their life people try to justify words, actions, decisions. Actually, we try to justify ourselves, our mistakes. Few are those who don't refuse all that filth that is an inherent part of our life, that is a part of us. And the majority wears their rose-tinted glasses and believes in some "solve-all-my-problems" spirits. One word: responsibility. Responsibility for our human nature, our lifestyle, our future, and only then we'll accept everything as it is.

Music<sup>1</sup> ... At first sight, it's quiet and even tranquil, but for me it's like tension before something unexpected. I hear some chaotic beats and they make me disturbing, and it really helps me understand and feel emotionally the spirit of the poem. Listening to this poem

Listening to this poem is like gulping for the air when you are suffocating with this trivial world full of stereotypes and blind faith in everything except yourself. We must think more widely and clearly and only then we'll be capable of improvement, because the person closed in the unplugged refrigerator, in contrast

<sup>1</sup> A musical composition on the CD that is a backdrop of the poem.

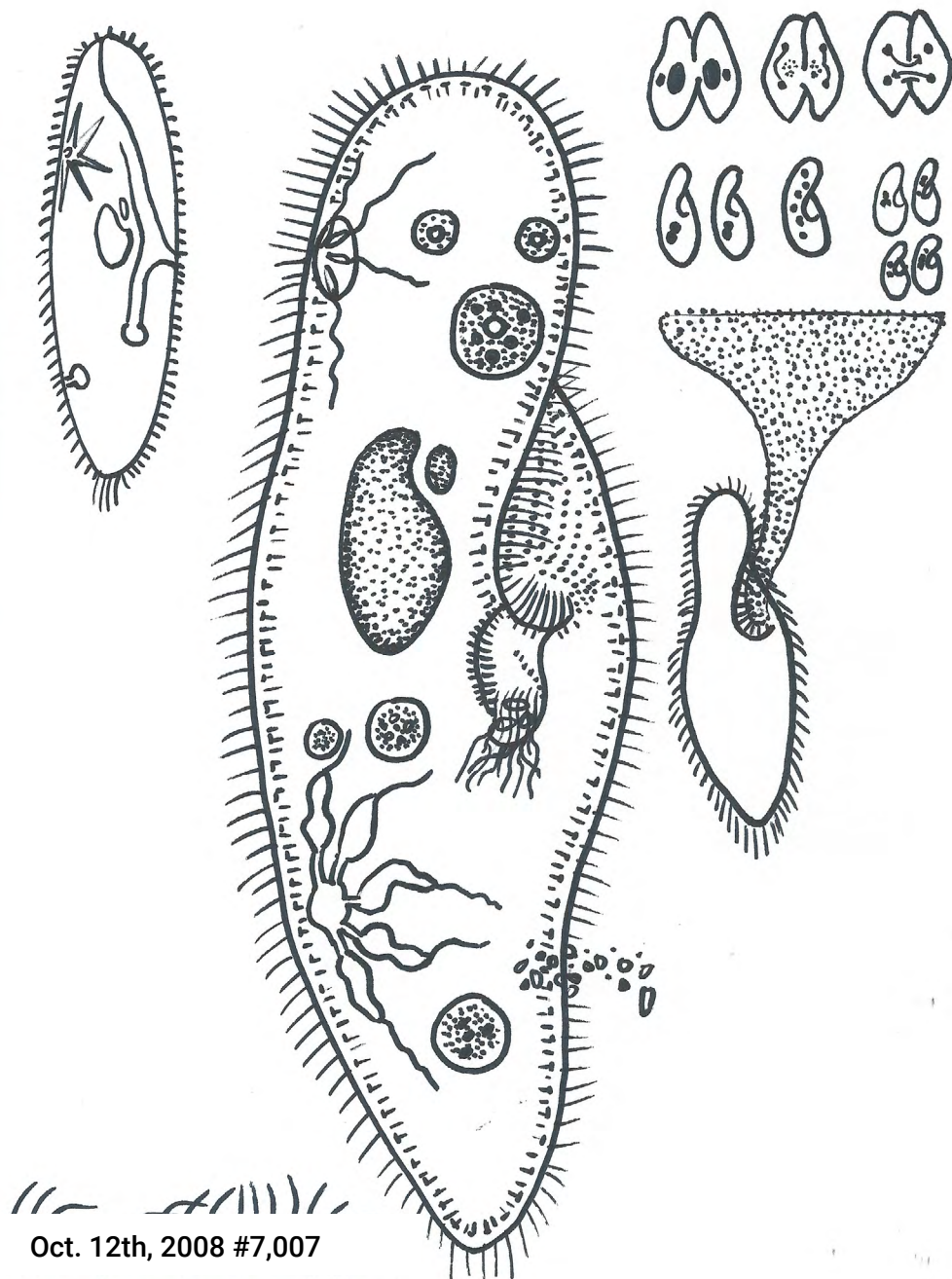
to the spores, cannot grow and progress.

The author compares the Universe to a used unplugged refrigerator with the closed door. So, it's just comfortable environment for the growth of disparate spores, which are, perhaps, metaphor for people and their life in the Universe: it creates good conditions for our growth and we are just miserable users.

The author calls people the M.R.S.A. of back-boned organisms. M.R.S.A. is a bacterium which is highly resistant to antibiotics, it can cause infections on skin, blood, lungs etc. So, we are like a bacterium on the Universe's body, we only spoil and use it. By the way, MERSA from Spanish means a useless person or a piece of junk, which also can be meaningful in the context. We are obvious to our ignorance, but still we cannot accept our true nature. And every time we realize it, we start to search for excuse. Faith nowadays is that thing which can justify everything... and people use it: instead of self-responsibility they'll better make someone else responsible for everything.

The poem is written in a free verse, but still while listening to it we can feel some rhythm. Of course, music plays here substantial role, it creates a kind of tense atmosphere with the help of which the words get a special flavour. The poem is full of simple sentences, they highlight striking descriptions (e.g. *"a warm, damp, isolated environment"*, *"A weed / An incurable disease / A triviality / A fluke"*).

Still I don't understand the idea of highlighting the



Oct. 12th, 2008 #7,007

Paramecium 6937 no.

last line. Here he speaks, I guess, about some flashy desires, and OK, these desires really make people happy. But in some moments the author's desires to shock and scandalize seem to be even stronger than people's desire to multiply.

**JK:** What's the meaning of your life? Do you associate yourself with this image from the poem or have other ideas about the meaning of life?

**BLS:** My life was an accident. My birth was not planned. My mother liked sex a lot. After I was born and she left my father she became a sex addict. Like all humans, life is what we make it to be. We all create our own meanings. That said, I feel like no matter how much meaning and importance we give ourselves we still have to deal with our isolation and the way we can not stop growing and spreading and devouring everything and using every resource in our path. Perhaps I am my mom. I swore I would never have a child because there are too many of them now and yet I love having sex. I have had a lot of sex partners in my life and I'm lucky I did not have an "accident". Last year we had 82 million EXTRA people born on Earth. The time it has taken me to answer this question 5,140 more babies have been born [population clock]<sup>1</sup> It is

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/> **BLS:** I recommend starting this clock at the beginning of a class and then checking it when the class is near over and seeing how many babies were born and how many people died during the class and how many extra humans were created in that amount of time. It may take this problem away from abstraction and make it more readily perceivable. However, some women might see this clock and then want to have 10 million more babies and that can be disturbing. I have seen this type of adverse effect of this clock on a woman in real life. It was very scary. The young woman became very happy and started smiling like she was going to cry and said, "Ooooooh ooooooh ooooooh there should be more 10 million more ooooooh. Good! Ooooooh ooooooooooh this is good. We need this! Ooooooooooh."



shocking! This also gives me a terribly uncomfortable weighted down oppression and feelings of virus and bacterial sickness. As for my life, I can only hope to generate and develop creative ideas and helpful new perceptions and psychological advantages and then try to pass them down to generations of others instead of my genes. I still want to help other people grow and evolve and adapt and mutate but I want to do this by using my brain and not my sex parts. But like it says in the poem, it feels really great to use the latter.

**JK: Do you agree that people are so miserable creatures or still you believe in human nature?**

**BLS:** I am not always so depressed as when I wrote that poem. In fact that level of depression or futility expressed in the poem is a bit unusual for me. I am more often hyper and manic and have more delusions of grandeur than I do bleak outlooks. I don't believe that human nature is naturally good or important. I believe that humans uniquely have the ability to change their nature and be good and give life an importance but doing that is very difficult. I feel like humans have discovered ways to solve just about every social problem that we face, but we still have them all. There are scientists and social workers and other professional people who have dedicated their lives to studying social problems and have the answers and the data for dealing with these problems but these people are not in power. They have no control. They have no real say over such matters. So nothing changes and the problems remain constant and the population continues to swell...

## "HIDE AND PLAY DEAD"

*by Bryan Lewis Saunders*

*Music by Michael Peck*

I hated coming home at night to an empty house  
 The other kids  
 Had to go in at dinner time and couldn't come  
 back out  
 I could always play outside forever  
 I was always the last to go home  
 And always alone  
 To face the "Bad People"  
 The "Bad People"  
 I can still see their faces  
 If they weren't waiting in the bath tub and shower  
 to stab me  
 They were one step ahead or behind me  
 Walking from room to room  
 Until I got upstairs to my room  
 I never tried to catch them though  
 I just wanted them to know  
 That I knew they were there  
 And that they were there  
 Somewhere  
 Between me, my bed and the stairs  
 So I would leave the lights on for them  
 And sometimes my dinner too  
 My mother hated that

But she was never there  
 The silence itself would make noise  
 Fast WA-WAs  
 Far then close  
 Each night I'd make a new path on my floor  
 So only I could walk through it silently  
 Without knocking things over or making any noise  
 I would set booby-trap trip wires  
 And rig up burglar alarms  
 With children's TOYS-R-US do-it-yourself electric  
 kits  
 I'd listen intensely  
 And flinch at ever creak  
 I never said a word to them  
 Because to hear an answer back  
 Would have sent me into shock  
 So basically  
 I participated and planned my own death and fu-  
 neral every night around 9 O'clock  
 I laid in bed stiff  
 And perfectly straight  
 Completely hidden under a blanket pulled tight  
 around me  
 Even over my head  
 I tried so hard to look and act like a mummy  
 My blanket was a royal blue comforter  
 With a white linear floral design pattern on the  
 back  
 And it looked so girly

And I hated it  
 But I'd turn over so the ugly girly flowery side was  
 on top  
 On the outside  
 So the "Bad People" would think I was already  
 dead  
 Like a mummy  
 And I would make no sounds and not move an  
 inch  
 And when I really had to move to scratch an itch  
 I did it super unnoticeably slow  
 And I'd try to stop breathing  
 And I'd try to stop my heart from beating  
 And when I couldn't  
 I'd loosen the blanket just a little bit from around  
 my torso  
 So that there was just enough empty space  
 Between the blanket and my chest  
 So the blanket never moved when I breathed  
 Once my mother came home  
 I'd roll over and go to sleep  
 Unless she was drunk  
 In the Summer time  
 I'd go so far as to build a sarcophagus tent around  
 the bottom bunk  
 And when the paranoia got real bad  
 I'd pull all of my clothes out of all of my drawers  
 And put them in one big giant pile on the closet  
 floor

And do "Hide and Play Dead" under there  
 And always held my bathroom for hours of course.  
 Then  
 I started sleeping with a baseball bat, two knives  
 and nunchuks  
 And I'd have my funeral next to the open window  
 So I could jump out if I had to  
 And during the day I would practice  
 Jumping out of the window  
 Two stories, blindfolded or with my eyes closed  
 no problem  
 And I would keep my eyes rolled up in the back of  
 my head  
 As far as they could possibly go  
 Because I knew they would check  
 If they even suspected  
 That I wasn't already dead yet  
 I'd spend hours laying in suspended animation  
 suspense  
 If I didn't do all this  
 The "Bad People" would kill me  
 They wanted to stab me  
 Nothing else  
 They were always there  
 Everywhere in the country  
 Stabbing people  
 Like Olga down the street  
 And my friend little Amy Baker  
 They were killed

Simply because there are "Bad People"  
 And they kill people  
 Sometimes they are drunk or on drugs  
 They have killed everyone who was ever murdered  
 But I'm not afraid of the "Bad People" anymore  
 Because on Friday  
 I BECAME ONE OF THEM!  
 I STABBED SOMEBODY THERE I SAID IT!  
 But I still hate coming home to an empty home  
 and sleeping alone  
 Every night when I go to bed now I have a new  
 ritual:  
 1 – Customary quick time spent flat on back less  
 than ten seconds.  
 2 – One finger kiss blown to each glow in the dark  
 star on the roof.  
 3 – Send and receive imaginary messages from  
 my ex-girlfriend.  
 4 – Then pray.  
 5 – Twisting roll to the right.  
 6 – Tug pillow down twice.  
 Ready?  
 BREAK!  
 LIFT UPPER TORSO TWIST AND SWITCH FACING  
 SIDES  
 LIFT TWIST AND SWITCH FACING BACK  
 BACK AND FORTH  
 LISTEN TO CHATTER  
 AND STILL HAVE "WA-WA" PANIC ATTACKS



SQUEEZE PILLOW DOWN OVER MY FACE  
 AND PASS MYSELF OUT UNTIL I DREAM  
 BUT I DREAM IN NIGHTMARES  
 OF TAKING SCAR TISSUE AND SCABS  
 PEELING THEM OFF LIKE STICKERS  
 AND PUTTING THEM IN AN AIR TIGHT ZIP LOCK  
 SANDWICH BAG  
 POUR LIGHTER FLUID IN THERE  
 LIGHT IT ON FIRE  
 AND BURY IT UNDER THE GROUND BURNING  
 SO THE WORMS CAN GET IN  
 AND ALL MY GUILT CAN GET GONE  
 HIDE AND PLAY DEAD IS FOR CHILDREN AND  
 SISSIES!  
 THE OBJECT OF THE GAME NOW  
 IS TO GO FROM ROOM TO ROOM IN THE DARK  
 AHEAD AND BEHIND THE OTHER BAD PEOPLE  
 AND SMASH THEM INTO OBLIVION  
 WITH A THIRTY POUND SLEDGE HAMMER DIVIN-  
 ING ROD ANTLER IN MY BRAIN!  
 J.C.P.D.  
 PDQ  
 BS  
 PTSD FLASHES  
 BULLSHIT!  
 "MOMMY'S GONE TUBES AND NEEDLES"  
 "MOMMY'S GONE TOO MUCH COCAINE"  
 OPEN SORE WOUNDS AND A GHOST COMING  
 OUT YOUR MOUTH

STEPHANIE WEARING NOTHING BUT A BLANKET  
 SLEEPS ON THE COUCH  
 LIKE A CAT  
 SPREAD EAGLE AND PEACEFUL  
 AND ME UNDER THE OTHER COVERS  
 NOT BREATHING  
 BUT MORE THAN EQUAL  
 TO MOST OF THE OTHER REALLY TERRIBLE BAD  
 PEOPLE WHEN I STRIKE  
 Compared to me  
 They are all like Chaim Soutine's dead dog  
 With two forks holding their chests open while he  
 paints them  
 Rib cage exposed guts hanging out  
 Like math needs numbers  
 I need more "Bad People"  
 For animal torture  
 More shit data  
 And poetry  
 "PUUHH !"  
 That's the sound my testicle makes  
 When I stick needles in it to intimidate  
 The other "Bad People"  
 Right as they are about to pass out  
 Sometimes when my testicle pops  
 I close my eyes and see millions upon millions of  
 Rene Magritte paintings  
 With titles like:  
 THIS IS NOT A PIECE OF SHIT

THIS IS NOT A PIECE OF FLESH  
THIS IS NOT A PIECE OF EVIDENCE YET  
THIS IS NOT SCAR TISSUE AND SCABS IN A ZIP-  
LOCK BAG

THIS IS NOT A KNIFE  
THAT'S GOING TO BE FOUND ANY DAY NOW  
WITH NO BLOOD OR FINGERPRINTS TWELVE  
INCHES DOWN IN THE DIRT  
NEXT TO MUNSEY CHURCH  
AND THIS IS NOT GOOD PEOPLE BLEEDING AND  
HURT

AND THIS IS NOT A REDNECK WITH NINE RED-  
NECK FRIENDS

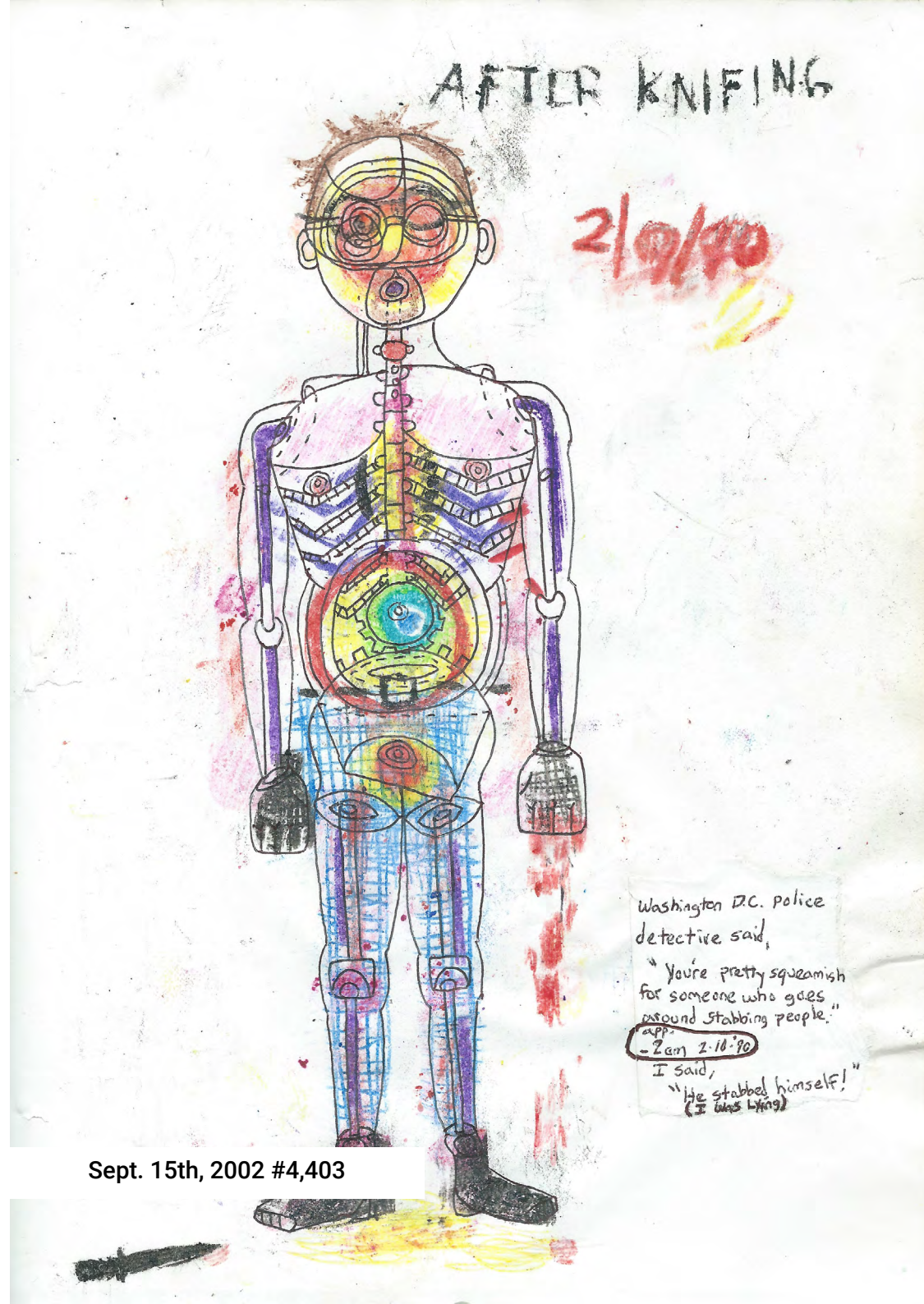
TALKING SHIT TO ME AND ME STABBING HIM  
AT DIXIE LAND

AND THIS IS NOT HALF A BOTTLE OF SAKI  
AND THIS IS NOT DENIAL!

THIS IS NOT A GAME  
CALLED "HIDE AND PLAY DEAD"

THIS IS CONFESSION TIME!

I CALL IT, "COME OUT DEMON! COME OUT!"  
AND THE BEST PLACE FOR IT TO COME OUT  
IS MY HEAD!



***NM (Nazar Matiukha):***

The poem "Hide and Play Dead" can be interpreted in various ways because of subjective perception. Some parts of the poem have a lot of symbolic elements, other parts are written with the help of stream of consciousness technique. Moreover, the plot can be explained from different angles. I would like to present my understanding of the full poem, and the implicit meaning which I find reasonable in the context of the narrative.

The dark ambient by Michael Peck makes a great impression, grasping full attention from the very beginning till the end. The music transforms into more intense tune in the middle of the composition. It complements and absolutely synchronizes with the poem. The sound flow helps to make right mood in various parts of the poem. Sometimes the music causes the feeling of danger, "impending-smith", hopelessness, and at the moment of culmination the sound summons the deepest sentiments of threat, unstoppable fury and vicious madness. Such a combination of music and 'spoken word' creates a unique atmosphere which absorbs you while listening and perceiving.

I believe, that the greatest feature of the narrative is a chronological aspect. The poem may contain a very strict chronological order. At the same time, the plot also can be interpreted as a very ragged and uncertain. If we accept the fact that the poem is struc-

tured in a chronological order, then we can observe a very abrupt evolution of a maniac, from his childhood – up to the time when he completely gone crazy. OR we can examine the poem as a confession or even flashbacks, in murderer's head whose childhood and eternal paranoia led him to the rampage state. Also there is another concept of the poem which is obvious. It tells a story about a child with a very vulnerable mind who completely drowned in his fears to be persecuted and abducted. The very title "Hide and play dead" suggests that the literary character will be followed by someone who wants him dead. So he just needs to hide all the time and pretend he is dead. The feeling of paranoia never disappears, and unending menace is always there. The author's tone of voice seems to be very expressive at the start, later it becomes desperate and more frightened when the events get worse and worse.

I have already mentioned my two main ways of understanding the poem. The first concept is a child's terrible life which, eventually, have driven him into becoming a maniac. And the second one is more about flashbacks in the murderer's head during his inner confession time. I would like to stick to the first concept. The plot begins with the literary character saying that he is afraid to go home, he cannot feel safety anywhere because of the 'Bad People'. These people are always ahead of him, they always watch, and check him. The safest place in the world, which is home, cannot be a



shelter, a fortress from the outside threats. Even his mother, the closest person, is not able to protect him, maybe because she doesn't care or she doesn't want to face the problem:

*"My mother hated that / But she was never there"* (About the things he always does to protect himself from the danger. The mother never understands him, so she never helps). Later he tells the following:

*"Completely hidden under a blanket pulled tight around me / Even over my head / I tried so hard to look and act like a mummy"* (she just wants to hide from the problem, and her son imitates her). Eventually, the literary character says:

*"So the 'Bad People' would think I was already dead / Like a mummy"*. (Maybe she has been dead from the very beginning of the story but it has never been realized by the literary character as the narrative is chronologically complex. But maybe, that is just the result of her idleness, or her inaction makes her to look like dead in the eyes of her son, in a figurative meaning of course). This image of 'Bad People' can embody the pure evil in the world, and the evil inside people, it is always a part of their nature. It corrupts and captures human's mind all the time:

*"They have killed everyone who was ever murdered"*. These people haunt him like ghosts. The literary character becomes so depressed with it, that he plans his own death and funeral. A real suicide attempt has never been made, but the play dead action never goes into

the background. He wants to master the skill of laying down breathless, only to distract the 'Bad People'. The paranoia gets him really bad, so there is always weapon near his bed. This never ending nightmare shakes his mind:

*"The 'Bad People' would kill me / They wanted to stab me / Nothing else / They were always there / Everywhere in the country / Stabbing people"*. A plot twist arises when the literary character confesses that he has become one of the 'Bad People'. I believe, it is a very obvious result of the previous actions and influence:

*"I BECAME ONE OF THEM! / I STABBED SOMEBODY THERE I SAID IT! / But I still hate coming home to an empty home and sleeping alone"*. Maybe his way of life, endless paranoia and indifference from his mother has lead him to such a choice. Perhaps it is the only way out in such a situation, nothing you can do about it, only become a part of evil.

The literary character doesn't afraid of the 'Bad People' anymore but his home is still empty. So nothing has completely changed. The mother has been idle, drunk or on drugs so the house has never had meaning, and it hasn't been felt like real home thus it has always been empty. So now, when the mother is dead and he becomes one of the 'Bad People' his house is still meaningless. And the new status cannot fill his inside void. I believe, that the author highlights this point just to show that very often the root of the prob-

lems, the evil itself comes from home and upbringing. This evil is appreciated by the closest members of the family. It is transmitted like a disease. Now the literary character has a new 'ritual', as he has become one of the 'Bad people'. It fully replaces his previous routine. These new spontaneous rituals make him even closer to the state of madness. It is even more unconstrained:

*"Every night when I go to bed now I have a new ritual: / 1 — Customary quick time spent flat on back less than ten seconds. / 2 — One finger kiss blown to each glow in the dark star on the roof. / 3 — Send and receive imaginary messages from my ex-girlfriend. / 4 — Then pray. / 5 — Twisting roll to the right. / 6 — Tug pillow down twice."*

The literary character describes his random 'ritual' rapidly and the speech flow becomes more aggressive, impulsive. The desire to kill 'Bad People' devours him. Besides, a pure madness captures his mind even more, the boundaries between 'bad' and 'not bad' people are blurred. Now he wants to kill, he does kill. The images of his crimes, horrific desires, ardent flashbacks appear in his head. The consciousness flow leads him to the fatal point of bitter realization — the paranoia fully captures his mind so he just wants to face the 'demon' inside his head, whoever or whatever it is:

*"THIS IS NOT A GAME / CALLED "HIDE AND PLAY DEAD" / THIS IS CONFESSION TIME! / I CALL IT, "COME OUT DEMON! COME OUT!" / AND THE BEST PLACE FOR IT TO COME OUT / IS MY HEAD!"*. The culmination reaches the highest point. The literary character wants

everything to Yes. I was a latch key kid. My mother worked hard and went out at nights after work and I was left home alone much of the time. I don't know if monkeys without a mother become more paranoid or not but I certainly did. come to an end. So he needs to fight his inner demon, that is he himself. We never know if he succeeds and if it is possible to win a fight with yourself and resist your own nature.

**NM: Is there a very strong connection between "Hide and Play Dead" and "If my Mother and I were Monkeys"?**

**BLS:** Yes. I was a latch key kid. My mother worked hard and went out at nights after work and I left home alone much of the time. I don't know if monkeys without a mother become more paranoid or not but I did.

**NM: Does the poem "Hide and Play Dead" contain any autobiographical elements?**

**BLS:** Yes. The whole thing is autobiographical.

**NM: According to the poem, there are only two kinds of people: the "Bad People" and their victims. How would You call and describe the other kinds of people, if there is any?**

**BLS:** Well the poem only addresses the bad people, but that doesn't mean there aren't other people in between or good people too. The poem is only about my childhood paranoid delusions of bad people not about all kinds of people...

**OVK: Do you find a phonological association of a "mummy" (as mother and a human or animal body**

**ceremonially kept by removal of the internal organs, treated with mineral salt and resin, to be wrapped in bandages) incidental or rational? Why does it make particular sense in the poem?**

**BLS:** It is what I did as a child to deal with my paranoid fears of being murdered when I was home alone. It is a literal description of reality, not a metaphor or anything poetic. It was a ritual that I did every night so I would not get killed.

**NM:** I have come up with more than five theories about the possible plot in the poem. But I have analyzed only one of them. I am very impressed with the amount of potential interpretations, even several sentences can change the whole comprehension. And phonological associations make a perfect sense. They are completely rational. The word usage clarity is always intricate. To my mind, the word “mummy” may be understood in the both meanings at the same time: as a mother and as an embalmed corpse. The literary character covers himself with a blanket, lies completely straight and unmovable like an embalmed mummy. But also he may imitate his mother when she comes home drunk, having a hard hangover, and lies the same way as the real mummy in a tomb. Also the literary character mentions that he makes a sarcophagus tent. This fact and the direct description of the mother prove that the both meaning of one word are interchangeable. That renders an image of a mother who is nothing more but a heartless living dead.

## “THE SOCIAL MASOCHIST”

*by Bryan Lewis Saunders*

*Music by Christopher Fleegeer*

The Social Masochist

Pain

Is extremely valuable

It lets you know when something is wrong

I've hurt people

I feel bad

I don't want to do it again

So I pick at old scabs

The wounds stay fresh

The memories splayed open

I will not forget

I can not forget

I'm not able to forget

My memory is broken

Guilt

I wear it like a red string

Tied to an index finger

Blood soaked and pointing inward

History can not repeat itself when time is frozen

like this

But this is the fallacy of the social masochist

Re-injury

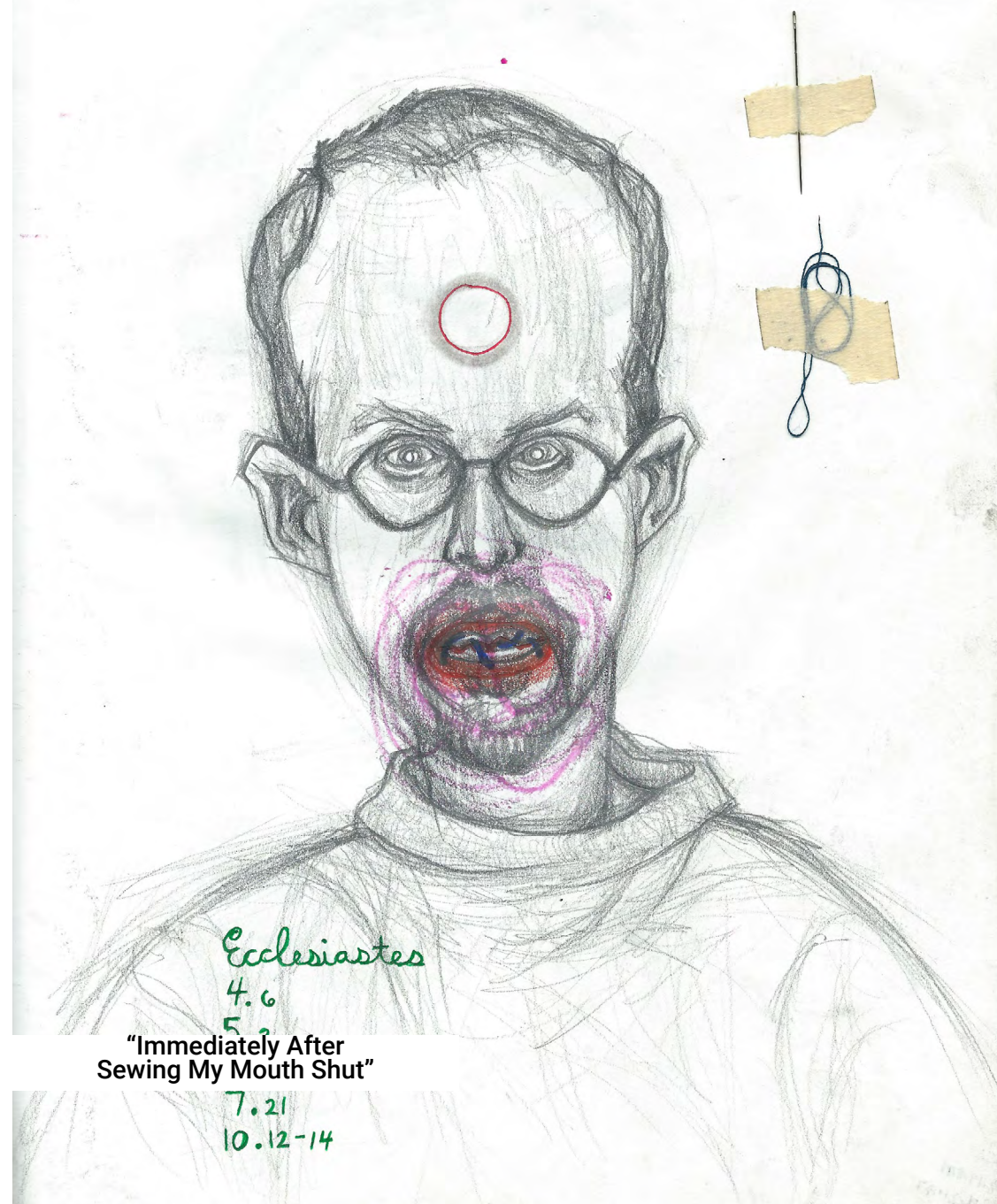
Upon injury

Upon injury



To avoid inflicting further injury  
 Inner conflict  
 Pain and misery  
 Spiritually disfigured  
 The soul leaks puss  
 Layered and leprous  
 Open sore stories of traumatic events  
 Not allowed to heal  
 The mouth and hands the most grotesque  
 It hurts when I open up  
 So I open up on purpose  
 Not opening up at all hurts worse  
 I hurt people that don't deserve it  
 With beliefs and thoughts  
 Like razor blades and salt  
 Self-fulfilling prophecies of doom  
 I see the future  
 As lemon juice soaking sutures  
 But hey  
 At least I'm not hurting you

Nov. 21st, 1997 #1,446



*Ecclesiastes*  
 4.6  
 5.  
 "Immediately After  
 Sewing My Mouth Shut"  
 7.21  
 10.12-14

AS (Ann Savyna):

Bryan Lewis Saunders stands out for his inimitable style. His poems are striking in their honesty and are very personal. The title of the whole collection of poems "Near Death Experience" has a symbolic meaning. It catches reader's attention and adjusts it to a particular mood.

"Near Death Experience" from my subjective perception symbolizes the rethinking of all these categories such as: life, death, pain, guilt etc. Moreover, curious is the fact that the background music is combined with poetry, so we are dealing, in this context, with contemporary poetry in a sound art. This feature makes it possible to penetrate deeper into the meaning, adapting to the particular mood and atmosphere of the verse itself as we have, for example, the power noise in "The Social Masochist". In this case, Cristopher Flee-ger's music complements the very poem and, what is more important, somehow influences the consciousness. Throughout the poem music brings the feeling of hopelessness and inward pain and with every new line of the poem, these feelings increase.

From my subjective point of view "The Social Masochist" is some type of the confession combined with physical and psychological pain. The poem highlights two main concepts that lead to understanding of the theme of the poem. They are the concept of pain, but the pain here is more of a material concept, though it is

connected with memory, and the concept of guilt which deals with inner pain. Furthermore, the poet uses a lot of symbols, epithets, metaphors and personifications which are a kind of a key to the whole picture. The whole poem is soaked with mental anguish, tension and powerful emotions.

"The Social Masochist" is not a very long verse, but at the same time it is fully saturated with meaning. Every word in the poem is included in liaison that organizes the very idea of the poem.

The very title "The Social Masochist" is the key symbol of the whole poem. Psychologists define social masochism as the desire of a person to be a victim in a conflict. The social masochist makes the conflict himself and then loses in it for the sake of moral satisfaction. So, on one hand it brings suffering and, on the other, – pleasure. But this type of behavior is self-destructive, which is what we are dealing with in the poem.

The poet masterfully chooses words and they bring negative connotations and supplement the theme. The diction is connected with words that determine physical injuries and diseases. For example, "*to pick at old scabs*" means that the speaker doesn't want to forget the pain, so he touches his wounds many times with his fingers, pulling them slightly and these "*wounds stay fresh*" and the reader may see in it some sort of desire for everlasting self-punishment. The word "*injury*" is repeated several times. Repetitions carry addi-

tional information and give a clue to overall meaning, since each subsequent use of the word subconsciously helps the reader to understand the meaning, and the word thus receives new, deeper meanings and connotations. The speaker wants to avoid *"inflicting further injury"* and for that purpose he makes *"re-injury upon injury"*. Besides, words *"layered and leprous"* connected to the speaker's soul and also are a link to leprosy and this may result in a lack of ability to feel pain, due to repeated injuries or infections due to unnoticed wounds and there are always *"open sore stories of traumatic events, 'not allowed to heal'"*. The poem is written in stream of conscious technique and the speaker's voice seems to be direct, expressing his thoughts and feelings. He is very close to the action, even immersed in it. All these things create regretful, abashed, anxious and macabre tone.

There are three main concepts within the poem: Pain, Guilt and Memory. They are all interrelated. The pain is important for the speaker and there is an epithet *"valuable pain"* as it *"lets you know when something is wrong"* and that pain for the speaker is never-ending. The concept of pain is close to the memories, because all the fresh wounds make the speaker to return to the painful memories. The author uses here personification *"The memories splayed open"*. These memories burst and bring pain.

*"I will not forget / I can not forget / I'm not able to forget"*. These three lines have different shades of

meaning. The first one *"I will not forget"* shows as the speaker is promising to keep some things in his memory. The second *"I can not forget"*, the modal verb can may express in this context that the speaker has no right to forget. And the last one *"I'm not able to forget"* shows that the speaker does not have the natural ability to forget, as his *"memory is broken"*. The concept of guilt is connected to pain and memories. The speaker feels guilty because he *"hurt people that don't deserve it"* comparing himself with *"lazor blades and salt"* and the guilt here is *"like a red blood soaked string, pointing inward"*, so this red string is a guilt that gnaws the speaker's soul. Moreover, it is painful for the speaker to reveal himself, but not revealing at all hurts worse and there is the ouroboros of pain.

The author focuses his attention on some symbols that I interpret as symbols of fate. Red string as a symbol of fate, so in a positive meaning it should be a symbol of hope, but in the poem that string is red because it is blood soaked and it may be decoded as a symbol of death. Also, there is another symbol that develops this idea. It is *"self-fulfilling prophecies of doom"*. A self-fulfilling prophecy is a prediction that directly or indirectly causes itself to become true, by the very terms of the prophecy itself, due to positive feedback between belief and behavior. This is a false definition of a situation, causing a new behavior that turns the original false notion into reality and line *"But this is the fallacy of the social masochist"* is confirmation of the



idea. Such self-fulfilling prophecy of doom, we may find in “Macbeth” by William Shakespeare and in “Oedipus the King” by Sophocles. It is strong supernatural element in the poem and it symbolizes death, destruction or other terrible fate.

All in all, the verse deals with heavy emotional experiences and memories that constantly pop up in the memory and bring pain, but the speaker is a social masochist and can no longer live without pain. Therefore, it is like a vicious circle of pain and it will never end. The future that the speaker sees is put in the same idea: “*I see the future / As lemon juice soaking sutures*”.

**AS: Do you use poetry as therapy? As a tool that helps you to get rid of pain and anxiety or it is just your thoughts that you want to express on the paper? Your poems seem to be highly personal, so is it difficult for you to “open up” through poetry?**

**BLS:** Oh yes. Definitely! It is a incredibly great tool for purging and expressing. No it was not difficult for me to open up with stories and words and poems. I had no other choice. Because if I did not do this, I would be back in prison forever or dead because when I snap I hurt people and stab more people and create more guilt and even worse self abuse. Without a release it is an endless cycle of self destruction and violence. I would rather hurt myself “socially” by telling strangers my bad deeds and my fears and my faults and tell them about the things that make me so angry, I would rather hurt myself in front of the people then hurt others which is the same as hurting myself. I had to stop the hurt.

## “I QUIT!”

*by Bryan Lewis Saunders*

ANIMALS DON'T FEEL PAIN  
ANIMALS CAN'T FEEL PAIN  
THEIR BRAINS AREN'T THE SAME  
THEIR BRAINS ARE NOT THE SAME

NOT LIKE YOUR BRAIN 5  
NOT LIKE MY BRAIN  
NOT LIKE OUR BRAIN  
NOT LIKE THE HUMAN BRAIN

ANIMALS CAN'T FEEL SHIT  
IT'S PHYSICALLY IMPOSSIBLE 10

LOOK AT THEIR ANATOMY  
LOOK AT THEIR PHYSIOLOGY  
WHERE'S THEIR RECEPTOR CELLS?  
THERE AREN'T ANY THEY CAN'T FEEL SHIT

NOT LIKE YOU FEEL 15  
NOT LIKE I FEEL  
NOT LIKE WE FEEL  
NOT LIKE HUMANS FEEL

LOOK AT ANIMALS IN THERE EYES  
LOOK AT PEOPLE IN THEIR EYES 20

NOW WATCH THE PEOPLE  
NOW WATCH THE ANIMALS

LOOK AT THE ANIMALS WATCHING THE PEOPLE  
AND LOOK AT THE PEOPLE WATCHING THE ANIMALS  
ANIMALS ARE PEOPLE

AND PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS 25

AND THE REASON WHY THESE ASSHOLE BE-  
LIEVE ANIMALS DON'T FEEL SHIT

IS BECAUSE THEY DON'T WANT TO FEEL LIKE  
SHIT WHEN THEY WATCH THE ANIMALS FEEL SHIT

BECAUSE MOST OF THE TIME THE ANIMALS  
FEEL LIKE SHIT WHEN THE ASSHOLES ARE WATCH-  
ING

I KNOW

YOU THINK I'M FUCKING STUPID OR SOME-  
THING? 30

I'M AN ANIMAL AND I FEEL SHIT!

AND WHEN PEOPLE FEEL STRONGLY  
WHEN PEOPLE FEEL STRONGLY  
THEY BEHAVE LIKE ANIMALS WHY?

COULD IT BE BECAUSE ANIMALS FEEL  
STRONGLY AND BEHAVE LIKE THEMSELVES?  
IMPOSSIBLE! 35

ANIMALS DON'T FEEL PAIN  
ANIMALS CAN'T FEEL PAIN  
THEIR BRAINS AREN'T THE SAME  
SO FUCK 'EM! 40

WHOEVER DOES THE TORTURE  
IS SUPPOSED TO BE THE ONE AVOIDING THE AN-  
IMAL'S EYES

I DIDN'T

I FUCKED UP

I FUCKED UP BAD 45

I FUCKED UP BAD AT SIN-TECH LAB

CARTER COUNTY LOOK IT UP THERE'S PROB-  
LEMS

I GAVE EVERY SINGLE RABBIT THERE A NAME AS  
GOOD AS MINE

FIRST DAY THERE WENT DOWN THE LINE

FLUFFY 50

LUCKY

BUFFY

BUCKY

MUFFIN

LOVELY 55

HONEY LADY

AND PO' BABY

I COULDN'T AVOID THEIR EYES  
 IT WAS MY JOB TO WASH SHAMPOO ACID  
 AGENTS INTO THEM GUYS

WHEN IT COMES TO SCIENCE TODAY AND TORTURE TOMORROW 60

THEN ON FRIDAY GO TO WORK  
 SIT DOWN  
 EAT A DOUGHNUT  
 TORTURE ANIMALS AND JUNK  
 APPARENTLY 65  
 YOU NEED MORE THAN A BA1, BS2, MF3, MFA4<sup>1</sup>  
 , PHD

YOU NEED BIG FUCKING PATHOLOGICAL QUALIFICATIONS TO TORTURE STUFF

YOU UNDERSTAND ME?

I KNOW IT'S SICK  
 THAT'S SICK 70  
 THEY'RE SICK  
 SIT DOWN  
 DRINK COFFEE  
 TAKE NOTES  
 TORTURE ANIMALS 75  
 GET SICK

<sup>1</sup> BA1 – Bachelor of Arts;  
 BS2 – Bachelor of Science;  
 MF3 – Master of Forestry;  
 MFA4 – Master of Fine Arts.

LAST WEEK  
 P & G CORPORATE OFFICE SENT DOWN A FAX  
 SAID THEY NEED MORE FACTS  
 CONSUMERS NEED RESULTS 80  
 WHERE ARE THE RESULTS FROM HAIR CARE  
 PRODUCTS?

IT AIN'T MY FUCKING FAULT I'M BALD!  
 I GOT YOUR RESULTS!  
 PUT SHAMPOO ACID IN RABBIT'S EYES  
 RABBIT CRIES 85  
 AND SOMETIMES

LUCKY  
 FLUFFY  
 BUFFY  
 BUCKY 90  
 ALL OF THEM JUST FUCKING DIE  
 BULLSHIT!

ANIMALS DON'T FEEL PAIN  
 ANIMALS CAN'T FEEL PAIN  
 THEIR BRAINS AREN'T THE SAME 95  
 THEIR BRAINS ARE NOT THE SAME AAAAHHH-  
 HH!

SIN-TECH LAB RABBIT  
 NUMBER 3022-A8  
 AKA LUCKY



MOST NOTABLE TRAITS: 100

EXCESSIVE PAW WASHING  
 CAN'T STOP CLEANING HERSELF  
 RIGHT EYE COMPLETELY BLIND  
 LEFT EYE HALF SWOLLEN SHUT  
 OCD DEPRAVED 105  
 MEANING MYSTERY SCIENCE QUACK PAID  
 LUCKY TORTURED AT NIGHT AND IN THE DAY

THE FIRST FEELING I SEE LUCKY FEEL EVERYDAY  
 IS PANIC  
 WHEN SHE SEES ME WEARING WHITE  
 NEEDLES MAKE HER MANIC 110  
 EYE DROPPERS MAKE HER BITE  
 TYPICAL CNS STRESS<sup>5</sup> BULL FUCKING SHIT  
 SHAKING  
 NERVOUS FUCKING WRECK

ANIMALS FEEL PAIN  
 TRUST ME IT HURTS 115  
 EVERY TIME I GET TO WORK

SIN-TECH LAB  
 PROCTOR AND GAMBLE  
 GAMBLE WITH ANIMALS LIVES  
 TIDE AND PRINGLES 120  
 ANYTHING YOU SEE

<sup>5</sup> CNS Stress5 – Central nervous system fatigue.

FABRIC SOFTENER  
 SHAMPOO  
 CONDITIONER  
 MASCARA 125  
 MAKEUP  
 POTATO CHIPS  
 IT'S ALL FUCKED UP

TYPICALLY  
 RABBITS WILL BREAK THEIR OWN NECKS 130  
 REACTING TO THE PAIN  
 TRYING TO GET AWAY  
 FROM A ROUND METAL VICE DEVICE THEY PUT  
 THEIR HEAD THROUGH  
 GOT TWO SCREWS ON EACH SIDE

FOUR DOWN 135  
 HOLD THEIR HEAD STILL WHILE PUTTING  
 AGENTS IN THEIR EYES

RABBIT EYE  
 HUMAN EYE  
 NOT THE SAME

LIGHT BEAM REACTS THE SAME WAY AS HU-  
 MAN EYE 140  
 BLINDING RABBITS FOR NO REASON WHY  
 TRIALS AND TESTS ACCOMPLISH NOTHING  
 BUT TORTURE RABBITS

AND PEOPLE'S PETS

ACCEPTABLE PAIN? 145  
ACCEPTABLE LOSS?

THERE'S PROBLEMS  
AND THERE WILL ALWAYS BE THOSE WHO DO  
TORTURE

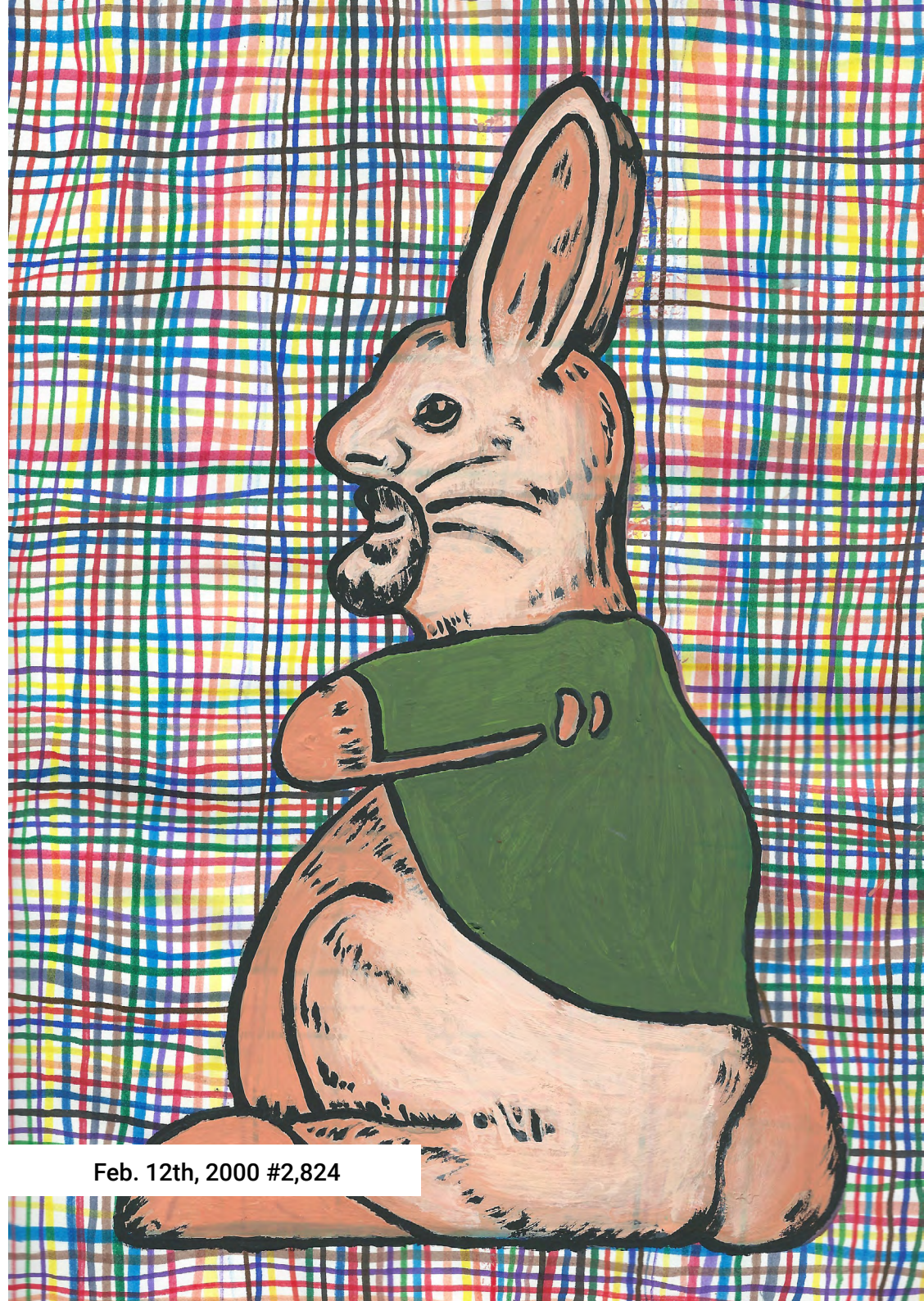
AND DON'T HAVE ANY PROBLEMS  
IT'S THEIR JOB 150  
THEY GET PAID TO TORTURE ANIMALS  
NOT LIKE BEFORE

THE MORE RABBITS THEY LOSE  
THE MORE BUDGET THEY GET  
MONEY MORE! 155

SIN-TECH LAB'S GOT MONEY TO BURN  
SO LET IT BURN  
BECAUSE I DON'T WORK THERE ANYMORE

SO FUCK 'EM!

I QUIT! 160



Feb. 12th, 2000 #2,824



***KV (Kateryna Vovk):***

The poet expresses his boiling rage and strong disapproval of animal abuse, which manifests itself in testing chemicals on animals. He also judges people, who find excuses for killing animals due to the differences of human and animal physiology and anatomy. Which, according to the author, is a complete lie. The author implies, that animals feel pain the same way people do.

This kind of animal treatment is widely spread among consumer products companies and industries. The author admits his own investment into prosperity of a company (P & G Corporate) with such economic and environmental policy. People's indifference makes the situation even worse. They choose inaction and ruthlessness for the sake of enrichment. However, the author refuses to participate any further and quits his job.

The poem "I Quit!" by B. L. Saunders is autobiographical. The subject of the poem is animal abuse and non-stop killing for the sake of consumerism. The tone of the poem is agitated and highly judgmental. Therefore, the general mood is anxious, desperate and angry. The poetic form is complex and the structure is inseparable: there is an absolute absence of punctuation and all ideas are written almost without breaking. The style of the poem is vivid: here B. L. Saunders uses the stream of consciousness technique and free

verse, since there is no definite rhyming scheme. Both form and style of the poem correspond perfectly with its contents. The poet's intention probably was to stir the reader's social concern about the abnormality of torturing animals for meeting people's special whims.

The poet uses various stylistic devices and means. The constant use of capitalization reveals the author's fury, his need to speak out and to be heard, making it more emotively significant. The Line 96 is unique in its use of doubling, which reveals the author's exhaust and irritation of hearing cliché excuses from animal abusers (*Lines 1-18, etc.*). These excuses have nothing to do with the reality. Thus, they are often used as a way to trick people into thinking, that killing animals is painless and completely natural thing to do for a human (*Lines 30-35*).

The author's choice of words is colloquial and very concrete. He conveys his message to the reader directly and expresses his feelings bluntly. The usage of retrospect technique (*Lines 45-59, 77-91, 115-128, 133-136 etc.*), as well as stating proper names ("P & G Corporate"), helps the reader understand the connection of author's anger and grief with the subject of the poem. This way, the whole issue materializes and acquires a physical form. The problem exists, says the author, *I've been there, done it*, so as the hundreds of people still continue to do. Moreover, some cases of vulgarisms can be easily noticed in the *Lines 9, 14, 26-28, 30-31, 40, 44-46, 67, 82, etc.* It reveals the author's negative



attitude towards the situation and impart more value to what he says. With the help of irony and sarcasm (*Lines 32-40, 60-76*) the poet mocks the unmeasurable level of people's ignorance and insensibility toward animals' lives. The usage of rhetorical questions (*Lines 30, 35, 68, 145-146*) contributes to that as well. The huge amount of anaphoric repetitions (*Lines 1-2, 5-9, 11-12, 15-22, 31-32, 36-38 etc.*), parallelism (*Lines 3-4, 35-96*) and chiasmus (*Lines 23-28*) contributes to the general mood of the poem, revealing the author's severe disgust and rejection of whatever the excuses for killing and torturing animals there might be. However, all the excuses, no matter how often repeated, stay the same – short of any hint of common sense or/and humanity. The usage of similes in *Lines 23-40*, proclaims the idea of animal and human similarity and unity. It was also supported by the enumeration of names in the *Lines 50-57*, where the author states: "I GAVE EVERY SINGLE RABBIT THERE A NAME AS GOOD AS MINE".

The poet believes, that humans are a part of animal world, and there is almost no difference in their perception and feelings. Thus, pain cannot be distinguished and treated as something peculiar to humans only. The author experienced that himself, while working in sin-tech laboratory, putting acids into rabbits' eyes (*Lines 59, 84-85 etc.*). Most of them suffer from pain, while being tortured; others die or kill themselves in agony (*Lines 85-91*). The fear that those rabbits felt was as real as any human's fear (*Lines 108-113*). Ac-

cording to the poet's point of view, people hurt and kill to avoid their own fear of animals, who always stay true to themselves and follow their instincts: "AND WHEN PEOPLE FEEL STRONGLY WHEN PEOPLE FEEL STRONGLY THEY BEHAVE LIKE ANIMALS WHY? COULD IT BE BECAUSE ANIMALS FEEL STRONGLY AND BEHAVE LIKE THEMSELVES? IMPOSSIBLE!". However, humans cannot ignore the fact of their own cruelty and ruthlessness, coming up with endless excuses, just to avoid the guilt that eats their insides every time they look into animals' eyes (*Lines 26-27*).

The author used a list of abbreviations in the Line 66 in order to show the reader, that no matter what degree you have, it does not make you a better person. People with PhD and even Master of Forestry degree still apply for these positions and are paid for torturing and killing animals. Most of them choose to see the world in rose-tinted glasses and ignore the murdering they commit every day. Some even see it just as a part of their everyday lives (*Lines 72-76, 60-64*), which is a complete atrocity and might involve some mental health problems of an individual, who works at such a drastic place (*Line 67*). In the end, the author expresses regret and guilt (*Lines 140-146*) for his own deeds. He is enraged with the fact that companies prefer not to care about animals' lives just for the sake of making money (*Lines 145-155*). Nevertheless, the poet doesn't want to be a part of that anymore and quits his job (*156-160*).

"I Quit!" is an autobiographical poem by B. L. Saunders, which focuses its attention on the real-life example of the humans' total indifference, insensitivity and depreciation of those, who they have tamed. More than 100 million animals, from mice, birds and fish to cats, dogs and monkeys die every year for biology lessons; medical training; curiosity-driven experimentation; chemical, drug and food testing. Despite the full ban of cosmetic testing on animals in 28 countries of Europe, Israel and India, popularized cosmetic companies like L'Oreal, MAC, Maybelline, Lancome, Chanel and others still find their ways in advancing cruelty products.

But what is animal testing? It can't be that bad, right? Wrong. And the author of this poem has not only experienced the horror of animal treatment in sin-tech labs, but actually contributed to it himself. He has seen everything: animals' fear, their pain and agony, despair and death. He got their trust and then lost it forever. One rabbit after another – being tortured and killed. Watching animals die and seeing their last struggles. Or even worse – torturing them to the point they want to be killed themselves. What kind of mentally challenged person can live with that? Imagine a middle-aged man/woman working for sin-tech lab, and then, as if nothing had ever happened, coming back home, watching Netflix, sipping on beer and patting his golden retriever named Cody on the head. Isn't it completely insane? So, if it's not the lack of empathy, why do people still continue to do this?

Well, aside from morality, among all the attempts to rationalize animal abuse, none can oppose the level of damage we bring to nature. Most of the animals in sin-tech labs die in pain, crying and convulsing for the sake of a shampoo bottle, you use on a daily basis. How about those acids, put into Lucky's eyes, eroding his eyeballs, so you could moisturize your precious tender skin once more? Then the question arises: who is the real monster here? And how much your mercy and goodness cost? The people's thirst for enrichment goes longer way than humanity ever did. And there is even less hope for covering humans will of possession with guilt and compassion. There will be no empathy or regret, until the numbers on their payroll cards stop growing. Where the demand is, there's supply – and we are all guilty for it.

So, is there any remedy? How can we make up for all the deaths in vain? There is no exact answer. The fight for animal lives and cruelty-free products has been fought for decades by animal rights activists and organizations such as ECEAE (European Coalition to End Animal Experiments), PETA, CCIC (Coalition for Consumer Information on Cosmetics), PCRM (Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine) and CAAT (Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing), to the prosperity of which you can contribute. But the least you could do is – quit, as the author of the poem did. Quit using cosmetic, food, chemical etc. products that are tested on animals. Quit supporting environmentally un-

friendly companies. And quit popularizing stuff, damaging our flora and fauna.

**KV: Usually, sin-tech labs choose a specific type of employees to whom you most likely do not belong. What guided you into choosing this job? What motivated you to get out of bed every day, go to work and get down to the nine circles of animal torture hell?**

**BLS:** This is the only story that I fully made up. It is not reality, it is imaginary. I was arguing with a medical student at a coffee shop who believed (because he was being taught) that animals do not feel pain because they don't have pain receptor cells. I got really upset and went home and pretended like I was him and that it was my job to look into the animals eyes by putting acid in them and stuff. I pretended that I was in this position so I could relate what I would imagine it would be like. I made it all up. There is no Sin Tech lab. BUT I AM AN ANIMAL AND I DO FEEL PAIN.

**KV: Aside from art therapy and poetry writing, do you have any precious memory(-ies) that stops you from emotional distress and eases your pain?**

**BLS:** Once pain or emotional stress begins it is very hard to stop it. Those brain chemicals and hormones that are at the center of those feelings are very hard to reverse or offset. Prevention is the best way to deal with those kinds of things. To prevent one self from having those feelings in the first place is the strongest medicine. I can not say this enough, prevention works best! For example, if I think, because of plans I've

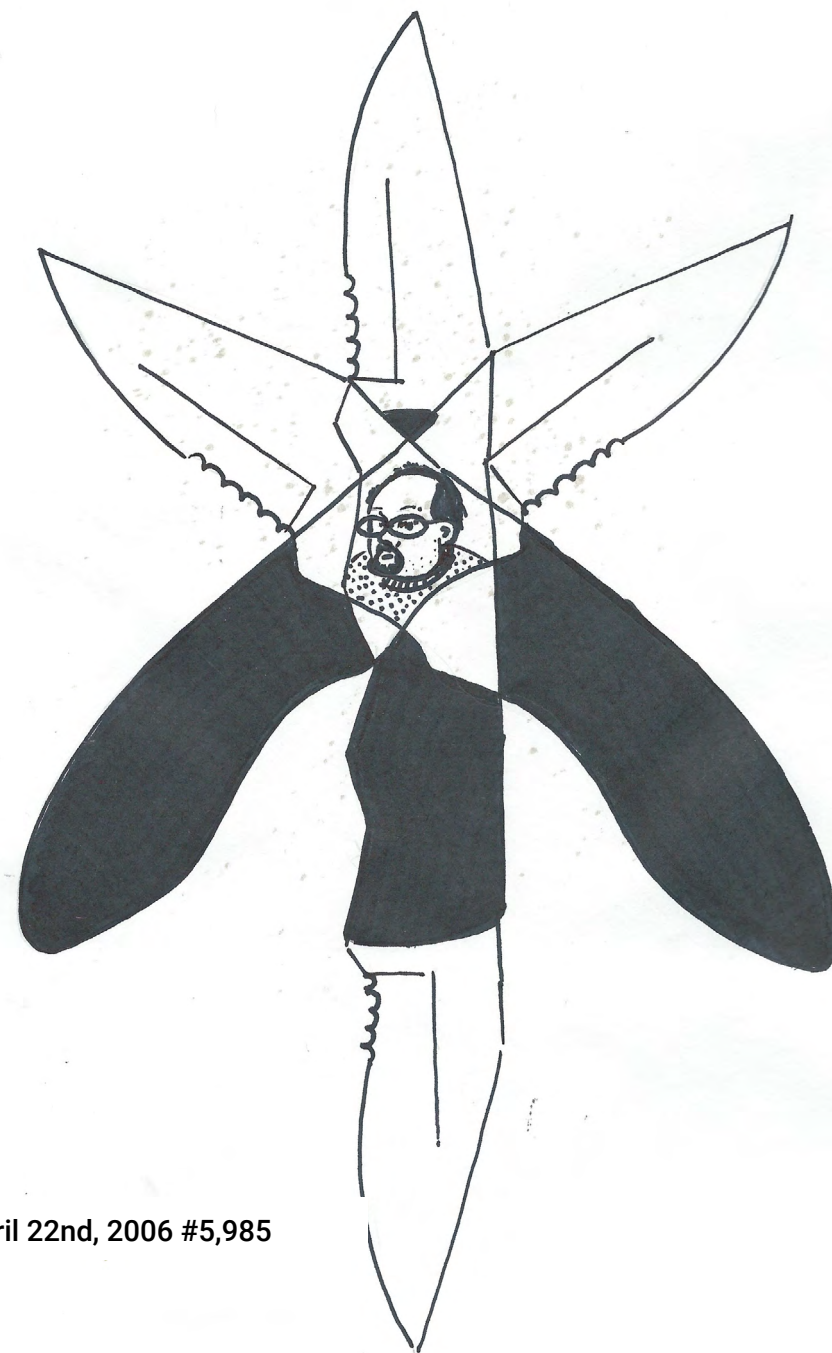
made, that I may encounter some social anxiety soon, or experience some negative emotional effects from something I am about to ingest I can pick one or two of my most calmest or peaceful self-portraits and look at them deeply analyzing how they were made and so on. This process is emotionally contagious. The feelings that went into the creation of that image can have the ability to transfer back to my body. If I look at every pain I have ever had in the last 20+ years I will begin to start feeling pains all over me. If I look at every happy time it can make me happy. Same with sadness. That is one of the great things about drawing that is not present in the other art forms that I know of. A drawing can contain a ton of information. If I revisit a peaceful image and look at closely, looking at how the hair was made, how the face was shaped, and the color choices that I made etc. if I look deep enough into an image there are physical memories and knowledge that transfer back into me and these imaginations or mental "recreations" of that calm experience can again take place in my brain. Because of my experience with drawing I can see how certain marks were made and decisions like those combine to impart the feeling I felt when it was created and can be recreated upon reflection. However, this can only happen in advance of a negative state, and it works best if I am feeling similar to the image already. If I am already disturbed, or anxious or angry, there is little possibility of peaceful emotional transference. But if I prepare myself with those peaceful or



calm feelings in advance of the negativity there will be different chemicals and hormones in my brain present that may be able to shield myself to some extent from the unwanted negative feelings of the future. Like a negative emotional deterrent. I have made myself incredibly peaceful before by watching slideshow videos of my most peaceful daily-self-portrait moments and then experienced things immediately afterward that would normally make me very angry. But because my brain had been primed with these positive peaceful contagions when the event happened, I was still cursing and going through the behaviors of being angry, but the anger felt very superficial and forced, like acting. There seemed to be little to no true "anger chemical process" present but yet my body was still trying to behave as if I was very upset. It was a very strange experience. I had less energy too. It was really quite remarkable. Anyway, never forget this, "Prevention is much more effective than treatment when it comes to manipulating your emotions."

**KV: As an artist and a man, who has been through a lot, what advice would you give to your 21 year old self?**

**BLS:** I don't think I would give myself any. Well, I take that back. I would give that person all of my art journals and a list of the most important things he should study and learn about.



April 22nd, 2006 #5,985

**"MY DEEPEST DARKEST FEARS"***by Bryan Lewis Saunders**Music by Kaontrol Kontraos*

I'm only afraid of snakes and spiders when they  
surprise me

And I'm terrified of heights  
Not because I'll fall and die  
But because I get this impulse to fly

I'm scared to death of drowning in debt  
And of mental problems brought on by stress  
And I fear  
Not being completely aware of everything around  
me at all times

So I get really scared when back to back long  
strings of coincidences  
Suddenly become  
Personal secret messages

And I dread  
Anti-psychotic agents, psycho-tropic drugs, heavy  
tranquilizers, cancer, drunk drivers, police robots, and  
remote controlled snipers

I'm horrified by the fact that  
There's nothing anyone can do  
To keep the police back

And stop them from chasing you  
Mortified  
That one day my fingerprints and DNA  
Will be found at the scene  
Of a heinous, gruesome, violent crime  
That truthfully wasn't mine  
That I had nothing at all to do with  
And I'll have no defense against the science  
And all of my family will be gone  
And I will die  
Genetically alone

And I'm afraid of people  
Like J.J., my uncle's friend that escaped from the  
Loudon County jail kidnapped a teenage  
girl raped her repeatedly with a curling iron plugged  
in, got a hundred and seventy-seven  
more years for it but might escape again!

And I'm afraid of brain damage  
With paralysis and permanent confusion  
And feeling powerless  
I'm afraid that I sold my soul to the devil  
For next to nothing  
And just don't remember it

I'm afraid of people  
That have nothing to live for  
Especially when they are jealous of me

But most of all  
 I'm afraid of my own "true" feelings  
 Of isolation  
 Giving everything away  
 The sense of permanence that comes with every  
 pain

And I'm afraid  
 That I'm living a lie  
 About to be found out right now at any time  
 Terrified of what's inside  
 When I'm found dead  
 With a self-inflicted plastic grocery bag  
 Duct-taped around my bloated head  
 AND I'M REALLY REALLY REALLY AFRAID  
 THAT ALL OF MY DEAD RELATIVES IN HEAVEN  
 CAN WATCH ME MASTURBATE!

Ever since i hurt my penis it's been getting smaller  
 and smaller. And I'm afraid that one day it  
 will completely go away and I won't even have one  
 at all or, just a calcified urethra and  
 nobody will love me because nobody could love  
 that either.

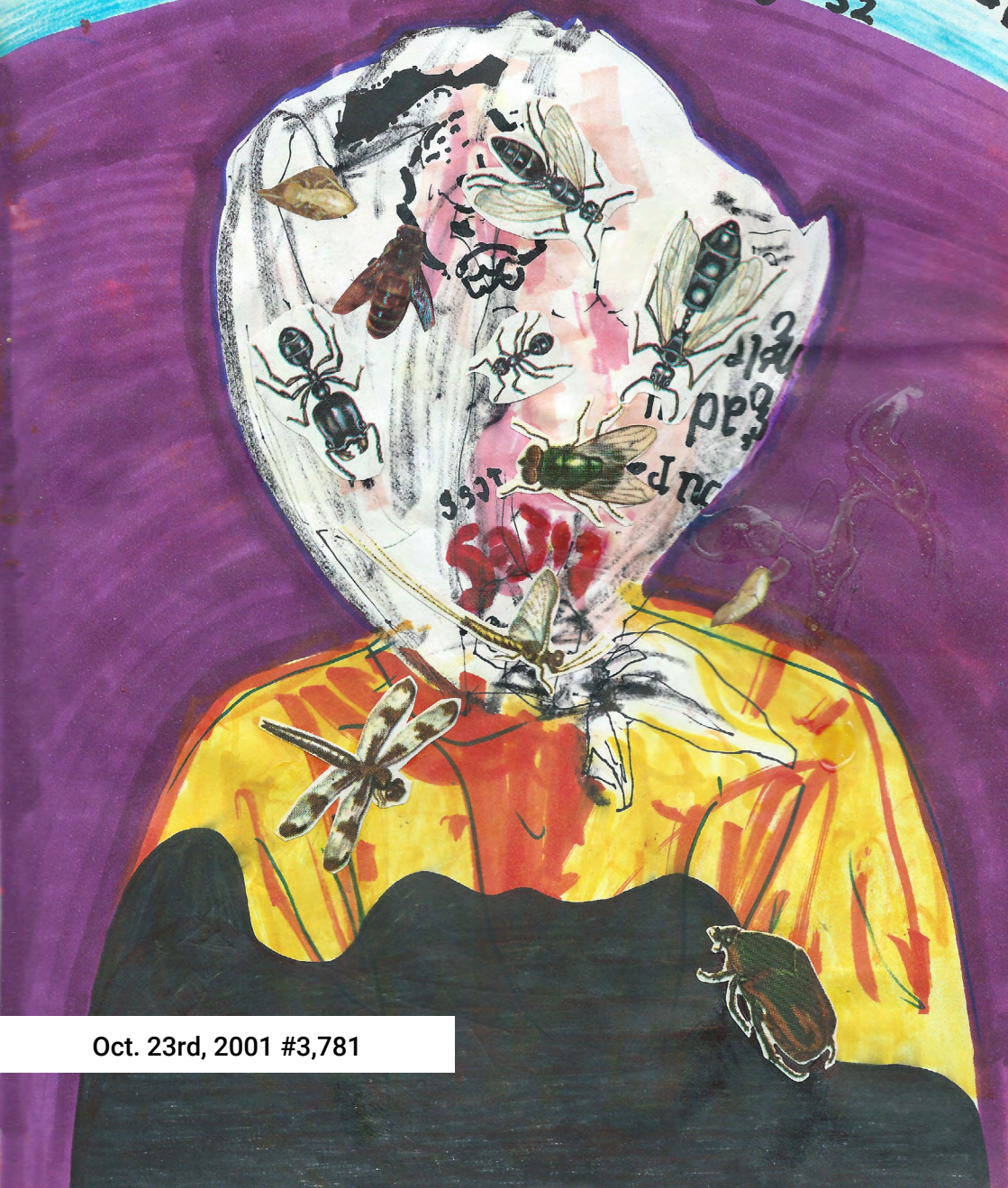
AND SO I'M SICK WITH FEAR THAT IN A FRUS-  
 TRATED FIT OF RAGE

I'LL CUT IT OFF AND FEED IT TO THE DOG BEFORE  
 IT GETS THAT WAY!

But I fear rejection  
 Wasting time  
 Loss  
 And knowing that I won't be here much longer  
 And the universe will never stop expanding  
 Stretching everything out  
 Into black particles of  
 Sub-atomic nothingness  
 Anti-dust  
 Forever and ever  
 Paranoid  
 Survival is selfish  
 So what's the point  
 Amen



YOU CAN TRUST BRYAN YOURSELF  
AGE 32



Oct. 23rd, 2001 #3,781

VH (Violetta Hryban):

I have listened to all the poems presented in the album and a lot of them impressed me with their ideas and thoughts. Nevertheless, I have chosen the special one, which definitely reflects the feelings of my own. It is called: "My Deepest Darkest Fears". From the first lines the author raises issues, which are experienced and suppressed by most people.

*"..I'm terrified of heights / Not because I'll fall and die / But because I get this impulse to fly".* This passage describes something which American scientists named "high place phenomenon". The people, who suffer from it, hardly ever have good stress resilience. Moreover, such feelings appear when a person is anxious, not calm or relaxed. The next passage which shows that we are living in a distrusted environment (The Age of Distrust) is the following: *"..I'm horrified by the fact that / There's nothing anyone can do / To keep the police back / And stop them from chasing you.."* All the examples of fears given by author led me to two main conclusions: The first one is connected with anxiety disorder, particularly with obsessive-compulsive disorder which includes: intrusive thoughts, persistent and recurrent ideas, images and impulses that are unwanted; thoughts that you might cause others harm or that you might be harmed (this symptom is presented in "The Social Masochist"). The second one is connected with the idea that the deepest darkest fears are actually of

secondary importance. The main and initial fear which every human being suffers from – is the fear of Death.

I'd like to express my appreciation to the author for sincerity and openness. Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us, because now, personally, I realize that I'm not alone with the same fears. And thank you for courage to write about things which most people prefer to keep inside.

**VH: Do you consider the fear of death to be the father of other fears?**

**BLS:** Maybe but I because I use art to face my fears, often like exposure therapy and face them in real time while making art I tend to focus on irrational fears as they occur or as I become cognizant of them. I don't think of ordering them in lists of importance I just try to tackle them in my art as they come. Fear of death is a big one and I have yet to take great artistic advances of doing therapy with that one. BUT I WILL.

**VH: Are you afraid of intrusive thoughts? And how do you cope with them?**

**BLS:** No. I draw them. I use them as a source of inspiration. I use them as subject matter for my daily-self-portraits sometimes. Most things that are bothersome to me, I use as kindling to keep the creative fire of my art burning bright.

**VH: Do you have obsessive-compulsive disorder?**

**BLS:** I have been diagnosed with it but I treat it with drawing. I have become obsessive with art and drawing myself daily. I feel as if I have redirected my

compulsions to creative acts instead of just blinking every time the windshield washers on my car hit a certain space in front of the road. I do that much less because I am distracted with other things. I still have tardive dyskinesia<sup>1</sup>, drawing can not cure it, but if I keep a foreign object in my mouth, even that goes away. I am very lucky my tongue does not stick out when it happens.

<sup>1</sup> TD is a disorder that results in involuntary, repetitive body movements. This may include grimacing, sticking out the tongue, or smacking the lips. Additionally there may be rapid jerking movements or slow writhing movements. Tardive dyskinesia occurs in some people as a result of long-term use of neuroleptic medications. These medications are usually used for mental illness.



**"MERCURY"**

*by Bryan Lewis Saunders*

*Music by Kaontrol Kontraos*

I just crammed the whole world inside my head  
But it came out looking more like the planet mer-  
cury

Let me explain  
The human mind  
Like the Earth  
Contains four very distinct regions  
A solid inner core which houses our beliefs  
A liquid outer core containing our feelings  
An ever moving mantle made up of our thoughts  
And a crust consisting of our behavior

Like the Earth the mind's material is layered  
So that the heavier or denser material lies at the  
center

And the lighter, low density materials or more near  
to the surface

Are not beliefs and core feelings like guilt and  
angst more dense in nature?

As I have already stated  
In the center of the mind  
There is a solid inner core inside a liquid outer core  
This solid core is not cooler than the liquid core as

May 8th, 2000 #2,935



one might suspect

Like the Earth the solid inner core has only a higher melting point

Because it is under a great deal more pressure

This enormous pressure from feelings, thoughts and behavior

Squeezes what would be and once was a liquid into a solid

Or as we call it, a belief

I repeat the interior of the human mind is way more hotter than its surface

Anyone who has ever seen a person snap

Can attest to this volcanic like eruption of man

But more often than not however the interior heat is trapped by the outer regions

Which then slow and prevent escape as in the use of reason

After the few seconds in which I realized all of this

I became dumbstruck with the thought that

My mind is more like the planet Mercury

Extremely rich in its core with set beliefs and properties like guilt and angst

But very poor in thought-mantle and behavior-crust

I believe and feel many things but don't think or do nearly enough

And like Mercury my mind once had a thicker denser thought-mantle behavior-crust

But all of that was blown off

By some gross impact bombardment of a planetesimal sized traumatic event

And furthermore

Like Mercury

I am so close to the gravitational pull of the Sun

That I'm frequently being pummeled

By shock comet accident prone guilt manifestations

Do you know what this means?

Mercury?

Winged shoes?

Messenger of the Gods?

It's my reward for being a sad, pathetic piece

Of chronic suffering anglo-shit is what it means

Close enough to the Earth

That people will hopefully learn something from me about misery

But I'm so close to the Sun

That I just burn up in front of everyone

And I view the solar system

From only a slightly different perspective

Not enough to even matter

And unfortunately

I don't like much of what I see

And what I see most clearly

Is all of mankind's insanity  
 You see  
 History  
 Has been repeating itself ever since we could record it

The examples of this are endless  
 If, one of the manifestations of insanity is  
 Repeating the same behavior over and over again,  
 expecting a different result

Then,  
 Each time history is repeated  
 Another nail is hammered in the coffin of mankind's sanity  
 And guess what?  
 Man's sanity is dead

We are psychotic animals  
 Nothing more  
 So the very thing that made us special  
 The human brain  
 Will be the very thing that destroys us  
 Right now  
 The road to our own extinction is being paved  
 With rationalization and justification because of  
 the front part of our brain  
 We know what hurts us or is harmful to us  
 But yet we do it anyway  
 Over and over again, everyday  
 Like an addiction or an addict's psychosis

And all my life I've been told  
 I'm the outsider  
 With a schizotypal diagnosis  
 Cramming planets inside my head

Under stress induced hallucinations  
 Check  
 Major depression  
 Check  
 Delusions of grandeur  
 Check

But this is not so  
 I am completely sane  
 While everyone else's brain is Pluto

The Roman God of Hell  
 9th Planet  
 Dog of Mickey Mouse  
 Brown in color  
 Ethane  
 Carbon Monoxide  
 And solid Methane  
 AKA Hades  
 Shit for brains

I'm not gonna stab anybody  
 I'm not gonna stab myself

We are detached  
 “Snort”, “Sniff sniff sniff”, “Bark bark”

Plutonium  
 The radioactive thing of nuclear bombs  
 Discovered by accident and mathematical miscalculations

The length of day is 6.8 as they all rotate in the opposite direction

The first cartoon character shown to actually have a thought process

Husband to Proserpine who they stole from the Earth Goddess Ceres

Proserpine ate 6 pomegranate seeds  
 And when Ceres cried the leaves died  
 And everything stopped growing and the birth of Winter

You are a faithful pet  
 With no speaking voice  
 70% rock  
 30% Nitrogen ice

Wartime Pluto, Private Pluto screwed up his drilling

And was ordered by Sergeant Pete to guard a pillbox

That the chipmunks used for acorn storage  
 You are the smallest planet

With the largest orbit  
 Farthest from the Sun  
 Burying yourselves with coins to pay Charon the ferryman

Pluto's moon  
 Then past the three headed dog Cerebrus  
 Who only lets the dead through  
 With only a few microbars of surface pressure  
 2/3 the size of our own Moon

You are six times smaller than the Earthy  
 And astronomers still argue  
 That you're not even a planet

1933 Oscar winner for “Lend A Paw”  
 They're all asteroids  
 Kuiper Belt comets  
 Junk snowballs



**AN (Anastasia Nychyporuk):**

The poem under analysis is written in free verse and its title may metaphorically represent the mind of the literary character. The narrative contains the criticism of humanity and its destructive way of existence as well as meditation about our consciousness and way of thinking. The soundtrack creates a picture of eternal darkness of the space and the author's voice and tone of speech evokes the image of the astronaut sinking in the abyss, and delivering his last confession and judgment to humanity. The melancholic mood of the poem creates the feeling of irreversible hopelessness of our future.

The poem character compares the structure of human mind with Earth describing the hierarchy of our beliefs, feeling, thoughts and behavior: *"The human mind / Like the Earth / Contains four very distinct regions / A solid inner core which houses our beliefs / A liquid outer core containing our feelings / An ever moving mantle made up of our thoughts / And a crust consisting of our behavior"*. As the outer layer of Earth is very rich and full of different forms of life, it symbolizes people's behavior. We may suggest that the author expresses the idea that humans often show-off and pretend trying to disguise their inner desert by their demeanor. In contrast to it, the literary character compares his mind with Mercury. Such a comparison renders a metaphorical image of a different mind which has a rich inner

core full of beliefs and negative emotions but, at the same time, is very poor in its outer regions (thoughts and behavior) due to some psychologically traumatic events: *"My mind is more like the planet Mercury / Extremely rich in its core with set beliefs and properties like guilt and angst / But very poor in thought-mantle and behavior-crust"*. Like planet is hit by the comets, the character's mind is attacked by the feeling of guilt. Nevertheless, the character views the constitution of his mind as a possibility to see all the insanity of humanity: *"And I view the solar system / From only a slightly different perspective / Not enough to even matter / And unfortunately / I don't like much of what I see / And what I see most clearly / Is all of mankind's insanity"*. It is metaphorically suggested that while the humankind repeats the same mistakes again and again there is no hope for its awakening: *"Each time history is repeated / Another nail is hammered in the coffin of mankind's sanity"*. The human brain, which is supposed to be the blessing of humanity, turned out to be its main tool of self-destruction in a desperate struggle to justify people's vain existence: *"So the very thing that made us special / The human brain / Will be the very thing that destroys us / Right now / The road to our own extinction is being paved / With rationalization and justification because of the front part of our brain"*. The character has always felt himself like an outsider but now he realizes that he is actually not mad but the people around him live in their illusions: *"And all my life I've been told / I'm*

*the outsider / With a schizotypal diagnosis ... / But this is not so / I am completely sane / While everyone else's brain is Pluto"*.

The author uses the wide range of metaphors and allusions to the ancient mythology alongside with the stream of consciousness to reflect on the shallowness of human mind which he compares with Pluto, the space object which is as remote from the Sun as a human mind from understanding the reality. The author's rapid associations with Pluto, presented through the stream of consciousness, render the mood full of despair and disappointment in humankind: *"Plutonium / The radioactive thing of nuclear bombs / Discovered by accident and mathematical miscalculations / The length of day is 6.8 as they all rotate in the opposite direction / The first cartoon character shown to actually have a thought process / Husband to Proserpine who they stole from the Earth Goddess Ceres / Proserpine ate 6 pomegranate seeds / And when Ceres cried the leaves died / And everything stopped growing and the birth of Winter / You are a faithful pet / With no speaking voice / 70% rock / 30% Nitrogen ice"*.

**AN: Would you like to experience the clinical death? How do you think it would influence your art?**

**BLS:** If I could be certain of returning unharmed I'd try it. I don't think that it would influence my art much at all because I wouldn't be making any of it while I was dead. I would not be able to write or draw or record any of it. I would not be able to have a dialog with my ex-

periences or observations so I don't think much would come from it.

**AN:** You have already experimented with drugs, stream of unconsciousness, total blindness and deafness, physical tortures. What other experiments you would like to carry out in order to expand the borders of your perception and to find new ways of expression?

**BLS:** Next will be temperature (thermoreception), then breathing, meditation, fear of death, fasting, physical exertion/fatigue, pain, sleep deprivation and so on. I am interested in doing everything possible to manipulate the elements and dimensions of human experience.

**AN:** Do you use the technique of automatic writing?

**BLS:** No. I don't think so. I sometimes start with an idea or phrase then I repeat it over and over again until the next words just pop out of my head naturally. Then I repeat both of those things over and over again until the next part pops out naturally. Then I repeat those those three things and so on. I continue to do this sometimes several hundred times before the next part pops out. But by the end I have the entire thing memorized and born from within me with a natural purity. But that is not every single time. With "Mercury" for example towards the end I combined information about the planet Pluto with the cartoon character Pluto and with the God Pluto. I purposely jumbled up all of those 3

different versions or definitions of Pluto together at the end. A lot of times I will think of little experiments like that and then try to form a way to make it go together with the original idea or feeling or whatever the inspiration was to write the thing.

**AN:** When you use this technique or while experimenting with the stream of unconsciousness how often does it happen that the things you have written unconsciously do not coincide with your beliefs and feelings in your conscious state?

**BLS:** Well the writings from the unconscious are perfect transcriptions of speech. The words are written exactly as spoken and each line is separated by a pause in speech due to breath or sleep. I just accept all of it as me, as it originated from me unconsciously or semi-consciously. Tom Waits says, "You are innocent when you dream", and I believe this! *I try not to let the negative dream experiences alter my perception in waking life.* Although, many things that happen in my dream do have an influence in my life anyway. For example, if I dream a lot about meat then I will awake and think I need to eat more protein. It is as if the dream is preparing you for possible futures. I have come to believe that it does this by pruning the excess neural connections we make in the daytime. This pruning then creates partially undefined patterns of experiences because the neural connections have been loosened. Then upon waking we create new connections and associations with the pruned or less formed starting



place pattern but within that vagueness can be an important need that should be met, like diet or exercise or whatever. And I try to become aware of those and treat them.

**AN:** ***"I try not to let the negative dream experiences alter my perception in waking life." Do you have nightmares?***

**BLS:** I'll give you an example of a nightmare that I had yesterday: My neighbor who always smiles really big and waves at everyone whenever he sees them, snapped and lost his mind and started secretly killing all of us. (For the last year I have seen him carry pizza boxes into his apartment but I have never seen him take one to the trash.) In my dream he snaps and becomes psychotic but no one can tell this from his appearance or behavior. He still keeps smiling really big and waving at everyone while secretly killing my neighbors and chopping up all of my neighbors and then taking their chopped up little body parts and carrying them out to the trash in stacks of pizza boxes. My natural instinct now is to avoid that neighbor. Never look at him, never wave at him, and never smile at him again and pay much more attention to his relationship with pizza boxes. He may be psychotic and I might never know it? I can easily see this happening in real life because I have seen it with such clarity in my dream. I have to try really hard to not let that experience, as real and as plausible as it seems, influence how I treat him in real life. It is quite difficult to do. I must continue to wave

and smile and say hi to him now. It is a challenge to not see him as a psycho pizza box killer.

**AN:** **What kind of nightmares and how do you deal with them or make any profit of them?**

**BLS:** I have made numerous music albums with them. I have made a comic book with one. I have even made an entire book on tape with my dreams. It was titled "The Confessor" and consisted of 24 album / chapters on 12 audio cassettes. Each album was a single night's entire dream experience accompanied by a different experimental musician from around the world. I have also done spoken word or performance poetry of the sleep / dream text. Oh and I created a way to transfer a dream from one person to another and first attempted this with a cassette release called "Le Bobcat". There are lots of new and different ways to explore dreams. I try to make each new dream / sleep release the results of a different experiment.

**AN:** **How do you estimate the possibility of analysis of your art by other people?**

**BLS:** I am not sure that I do this apart from any goal that I might have originally intended. If I wrote things to say live that might make people cry I would hope that the people would cry. Same with shock and panic feelings. I almost always have some intentions and I hope that I am successful with them. I have never once imagined people analyzing my words in the way that this class has. It is very different for me. My art goals are more practical, down to earth and pragmatic. I try

to achieve those goals and I'm not so concerned with any other ones. Like if I write something or draw something therapeutically to purge some negative feelings I do not think much of how other people might analyze the sentence structure of those purges. When it comes to an audience or individual listener I only hope to be; inspiring, mind expanding, a positive influence, and as for the art my hopes are that it can be stimulating and mind expanding, inspiring and also a vehicle for opening up new territories of investigation, to give others new ways of perceiving things and things like that. This class has shown me that it is possible for others to see things in other acute ways that I had not intended and it is pretty cool<sup>1</sup>.

**AN:** While writing the review there always was a feeling that I do not analyze what you wanted to say but just give my own interpretation of your words. Do you write in a way that the ideas you wanted to express are on the surface or sometimes you want the readers to generate their own interpretations and associations?

**BLS:** I would say the content is more on the surface and not hidden. Occasionally I will reveal some special thing that I think of, but then I put it on the surface so it isn't a mystery. The only thing that may ever be hidden in my writing it seems like is the formal quality. The process of how that writing was created may not always be obvious. I think poetry has become so much

<sup>1</sup> The post-grad students of a 2018/2019 academic year who interviewed the artist.

Diagnosis:

Quixotic

O.C.D. =

Trichotillomania

Compulsive Skin Pick-

ing

Generalized

Anxiety

Dec. 16th, 2009 #7,526

Exploding Head Syndrome





of a puzzle that the effort required to comprehend it often injures the poem itself. I feel like if you can't hear a poem and get some feeling and understanding from it as one hears it or reads it, it is a failure. If you have to study the poem and analyze other poems by the same author to try to understand what was meant and how one should feel about it, that poem is a massive failure in my opinion. That said, one must practice reading and hearing poetry because it is different than normal speech and involves a real skill.

**AN: How do you now estimate the influence of your early imprisonment on you further life? Do you think you would be a completely different person and artist if you weren't imprisoned?**

**BLS:** If I stayed in prison I would be dead. If I had stayed in prison perhaps one month longer I would have been seriously injured or killed. Or I would have had to kill others without question. I was released just in time. I was very lucky. I believe being in prison changed me. In prison, I was forced several times to make the conscious decision to not kill someone else. Those decisions became a part of my personality. Had I not been in prison I may have made different decisions about killing. I also sometimes feel like I was young enough (21) that my brain might have still been developing when I underwent that experience. I have never been able to eat food slowly since prison. We only had a few minutes to eat everything at every meal and that has stayed with me. I still eat hard and fast like a feral dog.

My girlfriend thinks I will break my teeth while eating so savagely. I have also become institutionalized as well. Living much of my life under some type of government agency; housing, benefits, food, and health insurance. Being in that environment for only 8 months in my early adulthood completely broke off any desire to live outside of this type of government scrutiny and dependence and yet without these experiences I would not be an artist at all. I would be an electrician. I would also have continued being a psychopath and mental abuser. Perhaps even a killer. Without art I would not have acquired any tools to attempt to change my personality for the better nor want to be more caring. I would not have a college education either. It has worked out well. I am very very lucky.



**"SUBJECT IN QUESTION"***by Bryan Lewis Saunders**Music by John Duncan*

Subject in question

Presents with a variety of symptoms

Symptom A — Hallucinations

False Perceptions

Subject in question sees and hears things others  
do not

Symptom B — Cognitive Impairments

Abstract reasoning

Subject in question does not reach conclusions  
that are obvious or logical to everyone else

Symptom C — Language Problems

Subject in question communicates oddly  
In a way that is hard for us to understand

Symptom D — Behavioral Disturbances

Mutism

Subject in question refuses to communicate ver-  
bally

And he exhibits signs of random behavior  
almost constantly

Symptom E — Alogia

Poverty of Speech

Subject in question has great difficulty engaging  
in conversation

Symptom F — Delusions

Thought Broadcasting

Subject in question believes all people can com-  
municate to him

Through Thought Broadcasting

The subject in question here

Is not these people on TV

It's not any of you

And it is not me

The subject in question here is God!

And I speak with great accuracy and certainty  
when I say,

"IF GOD'S NOT DEAD HE IS SCHIZOPHRENIC —  
AND HE NEEDS TO START TAKING HIS MOTHER FUCK-  
ING MEDICINE — AND HE NEEDS TO DO IT NOW!"

Dear God, who is in charge?

Dear God, who is running the show?

Father God, what is wrong with you?

Father God, why do innocent children get raped,  
butchered, slaughtered and tortured so much Father  
God?

Father God, don't you like kids?

God!  
 You don't have a conscience do you?  
 What kind of God are you, that would answer the  
 prayers of child molesters  
 and not the parents' or the child's  
 Father God?  
 What the fuck is wrong with you?

There's evil all over inside this fucking planet  
 And I can not understand anything you tell me  
 Because I don't understand Thought Broadcast-  
 ing Father God!

Father God  
 Get your head out of your ass  
 Quit being so selfish  
 And pay attention to the kids  
 Master Plan Father God?  
 Father God are you deaf?  
 What kind of sick bastard God  
 Has a plan that involves the abduction of children  
 And then the molestation, butcher and murder of  
 same said child?

What kind of sick mother fucker has a plan like  
 that Father God?  
 Omnipotent my ass Father God YOU ARE WEAK!

Father God  
 Jessica Lunsford  
 Three days in a closet

Bleeding from the vagina  
 Then buried alive

WHAT THE FUCK IS WRONG WITH YOU?  
 KILL ME NOW  
 JUDGE ME  
 STRIKE ME DOWN  
 IF WE DON'T JUDGE YOU THEN WHO THE FUCK  
 WILL?

OH, I'M SO SCARED FATHER GOD  
 YOU MUST BE ON VACATION  
 NEED SOME MEDICATION  
 GET YOUR THUMB OUT OF YOUR ASS  
 AND START SMITING PEOPLE NOW  
 AND SHOW ME SOMETHING FATHER GOD!  
 A NINE YEAR OLD GIRL DOES IT  
 AND HAS "KNOW" PROBLEMS  
 YOU "KNOW" SHE WAS PRAYING TO YOU!  
 HER PARENTS WERE PRAYING TO YOU!  
 TWENTY MILLION PEOPLE WERE PRAYING TO  
 YOU!  
 AND YOU ANSWER THE PRAYERS OF A CHILD  
 MOLESTER!  
 FUCK YOU!

You should be ashamed of yourself  
 And I am ashamed to be called a Christian Father  
 God

SHAME ON YOU!

It's Ok to be schizophrenic Father God  
Just take your medicine  
Since you don't understand language to good

THE NEXT PART HERE IS FOR YOU FATHER GOD<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Drone music snippet follows after seconds of silence.

# Missing Child



**Bryan Lewis Saunders**

Age 9 • DOB: 02/06/1969  
4'3" Tall • Brown Hair • Blue Eyes

**CONTACT:**

Henry County Va. Sheriffs Office  
(276) 638-8751 • 1-800-843-5678

Sept. 3rd, 2002 #4,391



**AK (Alice Kovalevska):**

The poem under analysis is written in free verse. It immediately strikes with horrific images, references and the unique way of presenting ideas which have captured author's mind. The narrative contains very direct criticism of injustice in the world and invulnerable evil. The author seeks the one who should be in charge for all the crimes, possible murders and filth all around the world. The one who truly should be accused is the God himself. From the first look at the title it is very clear that in the poem there is some kind of examination of the unknown subject. We do not know either who or what is in question, or why. The whole author's speech is not accompanied by a soundtrack. However, the author's voice is modified to sound like from a lab or a hospital room. The tone of voice is very impulsive, nervous, aggressive and even reproachful. The music composition comes after the author's utterance. The dark ambient by John Duncan amazes with its desperate and hopeless mood. The tune continues the author's message, and finishes it with the echoes of his sayings. These questions, this subject in question will exist until the end of the universe, and no one would be able to answer them. These questions will echo in the human's mind forever. In the very beginning of the poem it is obvious that the author examines somebody. He highlights the major symptoms, which are the symptoms of schizophrenia. It appears that

each subsequent symptom is worse than the previous one. Initially it seems that the author describes a person who really suffers from schizophrenia. But then he says: *"The subject in question here / Is not these people on TV / It's not any of you / And it is not me / The subject in question here is God!"*. After this stanza it becomes clear that every symptom from the list is not just a nonsense, but a real description of schizophrenia of God. It seems that the World Creator suffers from a frightful mental illness. The author asks how that almighty creature can allow all the madness, rampancy in his own world. *"Father God? / What the fuck is wrong with you?"*. Then the author insists that God should be in charge for all his insane crimes, unskillful universe management and, of course, for providing terrible balance in the human's world. If the God exists, he should be a very weak creature as he cannot even punish a single sinner by himself. The author is not afraid to say everything he thinks about the most "powerful" creature in the world: *"KILL ME NOW / JUDGE ME / STRIKE ME DOWN / IF WE DON'T JUDGE YOU THEN WHO THE FUCK WILL?"*. There is also a very relevant reference to the murder case of Jessica Lunsford<sup>1</sup>. The girl was

<sup>1</sup> Jessica Marie Lunsford was an American nine-year-old girl from Homosassa, Florida, who was murdered in February 2005 after she was abducted by John Couey, a 46-year-old convicted sex offender. Couey held her captive over the weekend, during which she was raped and later murdered by being buried alive. Lunsford's murder became a cause célèbre that influenced the introduction of legislation in Florida known as Jessica's Law, designed to protect potential victims and reduce a sexual offender's ability to re-offend. On August 24, 2007, a judge convicted Couey for the kidnapping, sexual battery, and first degree murder of Lunsford, and sentenced him to death. However, Couey died of natural causes in 2009, before his sentence could be carried out. <https://www.ocala.com/assets/pdf/OS10113823.PDF>

raped and buried alive. Everyone prayed for her while she still was alive but the God answered her killer's prayers instead: *"HER PARENTS WERE PRAYING TO YOU! / TWENTY MILLION PEOPLE WERE PRAYING TO YOU! / AND YOU ANSWER THE PRAYERS OF A CHILD MOLESTER! / FUCK YOU!"*. The author judges inaction of the God. He is ashamed to be a Christian. So it is useless and even stupid to worship a God who appears to be not only the mighty safer but the root of all evil. And because of creator's idleness he looks like a manic in the eyes of his doubtful believers.

**AK: Do you consider God to be the embodiment of the true evil?**

**BLS:** I try not to consider this god at all. When I do, I immediately begin to have fantasies of punishing and shaming and sometimes even harming some of its followers. I like the idea of church and the social values of churches. I have enjoyed thousands of free meals from churches. They use the free meal as a way to force the diners of the meals to listen to their beliefs and I understand that. It is their food, they can say whatever they want to the people who come to eat it. However, I think that everyone who believes in life after death should die immediately. They have no business interacting with our environment. If there is a better less polluted place for them they should go there right away. There is no higher or moral principle to be claimed by them when living here on Earth and at the same time using up and destroying and wasting precious resources.

When one believes that they can live elsewhere after death they should go there right away especially since the place after death is supposed to be much nicer. I think they should live there now. What are they waiting for? I like the idea of church and the help they bring us who live in abject poverty; food, clothes, shelter, jobs etc. But if you believe in life after death, you should not be allowed to make any decisions on behalf of others over our lives right now because their bias is too strong for them to think, feel and behave rationally or critically. This idea of life after death does terrible harm to society and our planet. The people that believe in it are incredibly selfish. Child slaves are making their shoes and other things for them to walk around in and they don't even need shoes in Heaven. There is something very wrong with them. This is a true story and a small part of the reason why I have such strong feelings about Christians especially who believe in life after death. One preacher at the Holiness Church of God in Jesus Name (Greenville) here said that if he drank battery acid and he prayed really good God would keep him from dying because his faith was so incredibly strong. He drank the battery acid at church and then he died. God did not protect him. However, the congregation did not come together and say, "He must not have had enough faith in God! He must not have prayed hard enough! He must not have had Jesus in his heart when he drank that poison!" "He should not have tested God in such a way!" No. They did not say

any of this to the people in town or at the church. Instead they told everyone, "He proved himself worthy of God! He had Jesus in his heart when he drank that battery acid and Jesus said to him "Come sit by my side in Heaven! You are now worthy to be in Heaven!" "Come here son!" They always say that suicide is against God or is against their religion. And they say that you are not supposed to challenge or test God. The Deacon at that church became the next preacher and the following week he too drank battery acid in church and died. He too committed suicide in front of the congregation. He too proved his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I say Christians can not have it both ways. They can not be committing suicide in church and proving their faith and going to heaven if suicide is really against God and their religion. The church allows for this. If they believe in God they go should go be with him right away. If they believe in Heaven they can go there right now. They can be faithful and honor their doctrine and show God and Jesus how much they love them and that they have them in their hearts and that they are worthy to be with them in Heaven. I believe they should kill themselves immediately.

**AK: What do you think about the people who serve God in churches and at the same time sexually abuse children? Do you think it's the problem of their authority and impunity?**

**BLS:** I think they probably chose those professions because they were abused by others in that profession

and the cycle continues as the victim becomes the abuser within the profession. I think what should happen is when they are caught and convicted those abusers should be taken out of the jail and driven around the city in the back of a truck and then once they return to the jail they should immediately be shot in the head. Americans should love their children and respect their children, take care of their children and protect their children.

**AK: If you are an atheist, is there any amount of chance for you to become a true believer?**

**BLS:** If I go to prison again I will certainly pretend to become a Christian. There are many helpful strategic benefits to being one. If ever I am facing the death penalty or a long prison sentence I will most certainly pretend to become a new Christian... It is really good for things like that.





## "BRAIN DEATH"

by Bryan Lewis Saunders

Music by Murmurists

Pathophysiology

Ceasing to exist

The cessation of life

As defined by physician:

Total stoppage

Of the circulation of blood

No respiration

The absence of all vital signs

Coma depasse'

No pulsation

And the loss of brain stem reflexes

Completely unaware

Of externally applied

Painful stimuli

(for at least 10 full minutes)

With:

No ocular movement

No blinking

No swallowing

No vocalization

No yawning

No corneal reflex

No breathing

No choking

No coughing  
 No gag reflex  
 No tracheal suction  
 Irreversible loss of function  
 Of the whole brain  
 Including the brain stem and cerebral cortex  
 Requiring measurements of reflex pathways  
 In the mesencephalon and pons  
 The Medulla Oblongata was the last to go  
 The etiology of coma known  
 Absence of drug intoxication and poisoning  
 Absence of sedation and neuromuscular blockade hypotension  
 Absence of severe hypothermia  
 Irreversible unconsciousness  
 As verified by isoelectric EEG findings  
 Acute CNS catastrophe  
 With compatible radioactive isotope angiography  
 Autonomic storm  
 (T-99) Transcranial Doppler Ultrasonography  
 Conventional cerebral angiography  
 Somatosensory evoked  
 Potential brain death in child clinical exam the same as in adults  
 With no pupillary response to light  
 Pupils dilated and midlined  
 No oculovestibular reflex  
 Tonic deviation of the eyes toward a cold stimulus  
 No oculocephalic reflex "Doll's Eyes"

Contraindicated in injuries to the C-spine  
  
 Brain stem herniated through foramen magnum  
 Giving no response to Plantar or noxious stimulation  
 Supraorbital pressure  
 Tempromandibular joint  
 Nail-bed of fingers  
 Metal instrument with a sharp point  
 Scraped along the bottoms of both feet  
 Last clinical assessment apnea testing  
 The normal sequelae of brain death resulted in cardiovascular instability  
 And poor organ perfusion  
 Providing hemodynamic stabilization  
 Pontine ischemia occurred with elevated ICP or brainstem herniation  
 Cushing's response  
 Mixed Vagal and sympathetic outflow bradycardia, HTN, irregular breathing  
 Neurogenic shock  
 Result of defective vasomotor control and subsequent loss  
 Of SVR  
 Hypovolemic shock  
 Therapeutic dehydration for cerebral edema  
 Hemorrhage  
 Diabetes insipidus with massive diuresis  
 Osmotic diuresis due to hyperglycemia

Cardiogenic component  
 Hypothermic depression of myocardial contractility  
 Left ventricular dysfunction  
 Cardiovascular system  
 Intensive care management  
 Use Albumin if PT and PTT are normal  
 Use FFP if PT and PTT are abnormal  
 Value greater than 1.5 x control  
 PRBC to maintain a PCWP of 8-12 mmHg and Hgb greater than 10 mg. over dL  
 Cardiovascular system use Dextran 40 -  
 To improve microcirculation,  
 Tissue oxygenation and reduce risk of thromboembolic complications  
 Ventilator management  
 Avoid histamine releasing agents  
 Maintain adequate oxygenation  
 75-100 mmHg  
 Avoid oxygen toxicity  
 In support of body homeostasis  
 Anesthetic management  
 Maintaining hemodynamics  
 For organ procurement  
 Routine administration  
 Of nonnephrotoxic antibiotics  
 To prevent transmission of infection to immunosuppressed recipients'  
 Development of a cellular energy deficit

Stability initial management involves fluid resuscitation  
 With crystalloid or colloid  
 Continue triple therapy T-3, vasopressin, and steroids  
 Insulin infusion may be required to maintain HCT greater than 30 percent  
 To facilitate O2 carrying capacity to donor organs  
 Anesthesiologist should verify documentation of family consent  
 Given upon notification of patients brain death



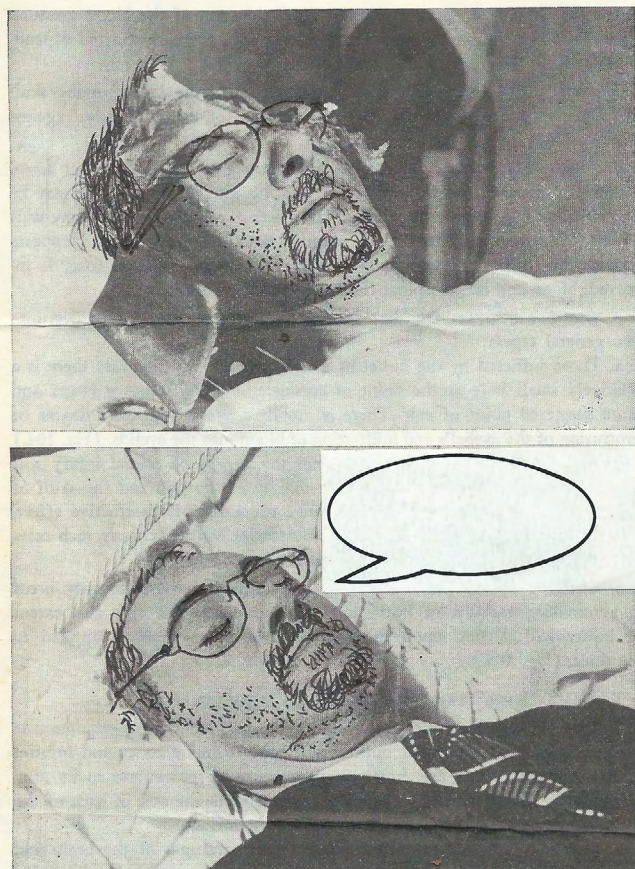


Fig. 105—Above: Crushed skull . . . Below: Same case after restoration.

#### GENERAL EMBALMING PROBLEMS.

2. *Erosions of the skull:* Malignancies, ulcerations, gummata, and similar lesions of the skull are given the same local preservation and plastic surgery treatment as those appearing on other exposed parts of the body. However,

### AY (Alyona Yukhymchuk):

I have listened to the album called “Near the Death Experience.” This title absolutely expresses its context. It deals with life experience and states of mind. This album has all reasons to be called autobiographical. While listening I was impressed by the author’s way of reciting his poetry and the choice of background music. He did it emotionally, expressively and passionately. You can feel that entire atmosphere and those feelings he wanted to share. There were moments when I associated myself with the author. Some moments of life, personal experience, depression, apathy, meaningless of existence, childhood traumas. I think that everyone can find something special and personal in his words, relate to his fears, loneliness, forsaking, hopelessness or inner disasters.

I am struck with the poem “The Brain Death”. That music, words... there is something in it that finds way to my subconsciousness. While reading I felt myself on a surgical table, dying. The surgical table is moving; flashing light that shines too brightly and literally cuts my eyes, then... absolute darkness. Just scratchy, unbearable sound of the hospital cots` wheels. And in a moment I feel nothing. Absolute emptiness, no suffering, total indifference. They usually call it “an apathy”. It feels like as if I’m watching the movie of my life: objectively observing my body somewhere above. As if I’m caged, trapped in absolute emptiness with no end,

no reason and no hope. Is there a way out? Or is it supposed to be like that forever? Somebody is checking my vital signs and pulsation, trying to bring me back to life and make my heart beat again. But when your brain is dead you can't be alive. Still they are trying to save you. Intensive care management... respiration, albumin... "Hey!", — I said to myself. "Take a closer look; it's you who is looking for living signs in your dead body. Everything is in your head! You are the only reason of your constant suffering. Your brain is the most powerful system in our physical body. This is the mechanism that brings you more pain than any other part of you. Can't we say that it is just a slow destructive bomb? Brain...it controls everything, but we can't control it".

The music in this poem is supportive, it evokes the "hospital" atmosphere. The background music reminds that appalling feeling. The lexical units of the poem materialize and infiltrate into reality. You can fully immerse yourself in that place and feel yourself like a patient with symptoms incompatible with life. It seems like the author had an experience of being between death and life. He describes it in so detailed way like he was out of his body and just observed the process of his own saving. In this particular poem the author's voice sounds like he is in an empty ward or a large hospital corridor. His voice echoes like a doctor's speech, who enumerates the symptoms and his actions. He speaks fast and that add intension to the situation. Everything is happening really fast, because

there is no time for thinking, his brain can stop functioning any minute.

**AY: Have you ever been on the verge of life and death?**

**BLS:** Yes. 8 times. That was the other poem "If I was a Cat-".

**AY: Was it difficult to write a poem with such a great amount of medical terms?**

**BLS:** No. It was in fact much easier to write. The only difficulty was trying to line up the terms so that the sentences or phrases would rhyme. This is all medical jargon and was partly a commentary on all of these medical and CSI<sup>1</sup> TV shows in the States. The actors only have 22 minutes so they have to talk fast and say technical things to make the situations seem real on TV.

**AY: What did you want to convey by this poem?**

**BLS:** The video that accompanied this poem for performance was a home video of a really graphic car crash with multiple fatalities and someone's head was totally smashed in. I made the video a PSA (Public Service Announcement), like an advertisement, against drunk driving and not wearing your seatbelt. Also the final positive moral or message was to request people to become organ donors.

<sup>1</sup> CSI: Crime Scene Investigation is an American procedural forensics crime drama television series.

VD (Valeriya Dupliychuk):

I was very impressed when I got to know that in 1995 he began drawing at least one self-portrait every day. He also began documenting both his dreams and somniloquy which led to a wealth of source material for both audio releases and books.

His collection of poems called “Near Death Experience” is something absolutely new and extraordinary for me. It seems to me a little bit crazy, but still it is worth knowing about. While reading some of his poems I had a feeling of being worried and unhappy, so I guess the author was mentally or emotionally upset while writing them. But still all his poems have a deep sense, which made me think over many important things, because Bryan covered different aspects of everyday life, starting from his childhood up to the present days of his life.

The poem I’d like to analyze is called “The Store”<sup>1</sup>. When I read it, I had a feeling that the author took me on a journey to the store, where he did shopping every day. He starts every new sentence with the phrase “One time I went to a store”, which transfers the reader to the shop where the events are going on. He says he stops breathing when he walks in the door, but he doesn’t describe the reason why. I guess he doesn’t want to enter this store, because everything remains the same there: the smell of meat, black guys kicking and beat-

<sup>1</sup> See the poem and assignments in the Comparative Analysis section in the following pages.

ing white guys, people who got stabbed in front of the store and no one is going to be punished and so on. The general atmosphere is very pessimistic, and even the police can’t stop this mess. Moreover, it also takes part in it: it drives a police car into the store, hits lots of people and leaves them bleeding absolutely helpless.

The music accompanying this poem is more like a set of sounds from the supermarket. We can hear the cash register and it drifts the reader back into his ordinary life, when day by day he goes to the same shop and does the same routine. Bryan Saunders ends up his poem saying that he still goes to the store. He explains that everyone has to. But then, completely unexpected, he says that we all can live without the store. So I can make a conclusion that the author keeps all our options open and allows us to choose either to come to terms with all the cruelty and injustice of this world or to stay away from it, but still there is no guarantee that it won’t affect us unexpectedly.

To cut the long story short I would like to say that Bryan Lewis Saunders is using his creativity to express and talk about subjects many would be too embarrassed or ashamed to share. It’s what makes his art so raw, so vital, because it may be a very real lifeline for him.

**VD: Have you ever seen the plot of your poems in your dreams?**

**BLS:** No never. Unless they are poems that I made specifically from the dreams. Then the poem itself is



the actual dream recording. In the U.S. "The Store" is a comical funny poem. It gives people time to take a breath with laughter and relax in the middle of all of the tragedies I would talk about.

The video that accompanies it is a slideshow video using Google Maps images of where the stores were where I witnessed all of these things. Most all of the stores were 7-11 convenience stores.



April 7th, 2010 #7,679

## PART III: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

*Allen Ginsberg vs Bryan Lewis Saunders*

### "A SUPERMARKET IN CALIFORNIA"

*by Allen Ginsberg*

What thoughts I have of you tonight, Walt Whitman,  
for I walked down the sidestreets under the trees with  
a headache self-conscious looking at the full moon.

In my hungry fatigue, and shopping for images, I  
went into the neon fruit supermarket, dreaming of your  
enumerations!

What peaches and what penumbras! Whole fami-  
lies shopping at night! Aisles full of husbands! Wives in  
the avocados, babies in the tomatoes!—and you, Garcia  
Lorca, what were you doing down by the watermelons?

I saw you, Walt Whitman, childless, lonely old  
grubber, poking among the meats in the refrigerator  
and eyeing the grocery boys.

I heard you asking questions of each: Who killed  
the pork chops? What price bananas? Are you my An-  
gel?

I wandered in and out of the brilliant stacks of  
cans following you, and followed in my imagination by  
the store detective.

We strode down the open corridors together in our  
solitary fancy tasting artichokes, possessing every fro-

zen delicacy, and never passing the cashier.

Where are we going, Walt Whitman? The doors  
close in an hour. Which way does your beard point to-  
night?

(I touch your book and dream of our odyssey in  
the supermarket and feel absurd.)

Will we walk all night through solitary streets? The  
trees add shade to shade, lights out in the houses, we'll  
both be lonely.

Will we stroll dreaming of the lost America of love  
past blue automobiles in driveways, home to our silent  
cottage?

Ah, dear father, graybeard, lonely old cour-  
age-teacher, what America did you have when Charon  
quit poling his ferry and you got out on a smoking bank  
and stood watching the boat disappear on the black  
waters of Lethe?

*1955. From 'Collected Poems 1947-1980'.*

**"THE STORE"***by Bryan Lewis Saunders*

One time I went to the store and just stopped breathing when I walked in the door.

One time I went to the store and smelled all of the meat in the store.

One time I went to the store and stole cigarettes and got arrested for resisting arrest in the store.

One time I went to the store and tried to steal gas, but the Arabs that worked in the store held my friend Craig hostage in the store, until I came back with the money.

One time I went to the store and got shocked by a stun gun pen in the store.

One time I went to the store and almost got electrocuted by the arcade game Galaga.

One time I went to the store and an old man was getting CPR on the floor of the store.

One time I went to the store and spit on a girl in the store.

One time I went to the store and a dozen black guys were kicking and beating two white guys in the store.

One time I went to the store and saw someone get stabbed in front of the store, so I just kept driving.

One time I went to the store and was horsing around in the store with a friend and a basketball, and

a newborn baby in a shopping cart almost got its head smashed in by the basketball in the store.

One time I went to the store and a police officer backed into a car full of rednecks, and the rednecks called him the "n" word. And in anger the policeman drove his car into the store and lots of people were cut and bleeding all over the store. (And everyone from the store next door came over and started looting.)

One time I went to the store and the cashiers face melted off.

One time I went to the store and faked a seizure so my friend could steal a dozen eggs in the store.

One time I went to the store and saw two people hooked up to I.V. bags in the back of the store.

One time I went to the store and an eleven year old girl wouldn't stop grabbing my Grandfather's groin saying, "Hey mister give me a dollar, let me feel yo dick, hey mister, let me feel yo dick, fo' a dollar." in the store.

One time I went to the store and saw a customer wearing a football helmet and a diaper and the cashier had a gun.

One time I went to the store and saw blood all over the walls and floor.

One time I went to the store and took a shit on the bathroom floor of the store, because the toilet was so nasty.

One time I went to the store, walked into the walk in freezer and took off all of my clothes and sat on a case of cheese, until the manager made me leave the

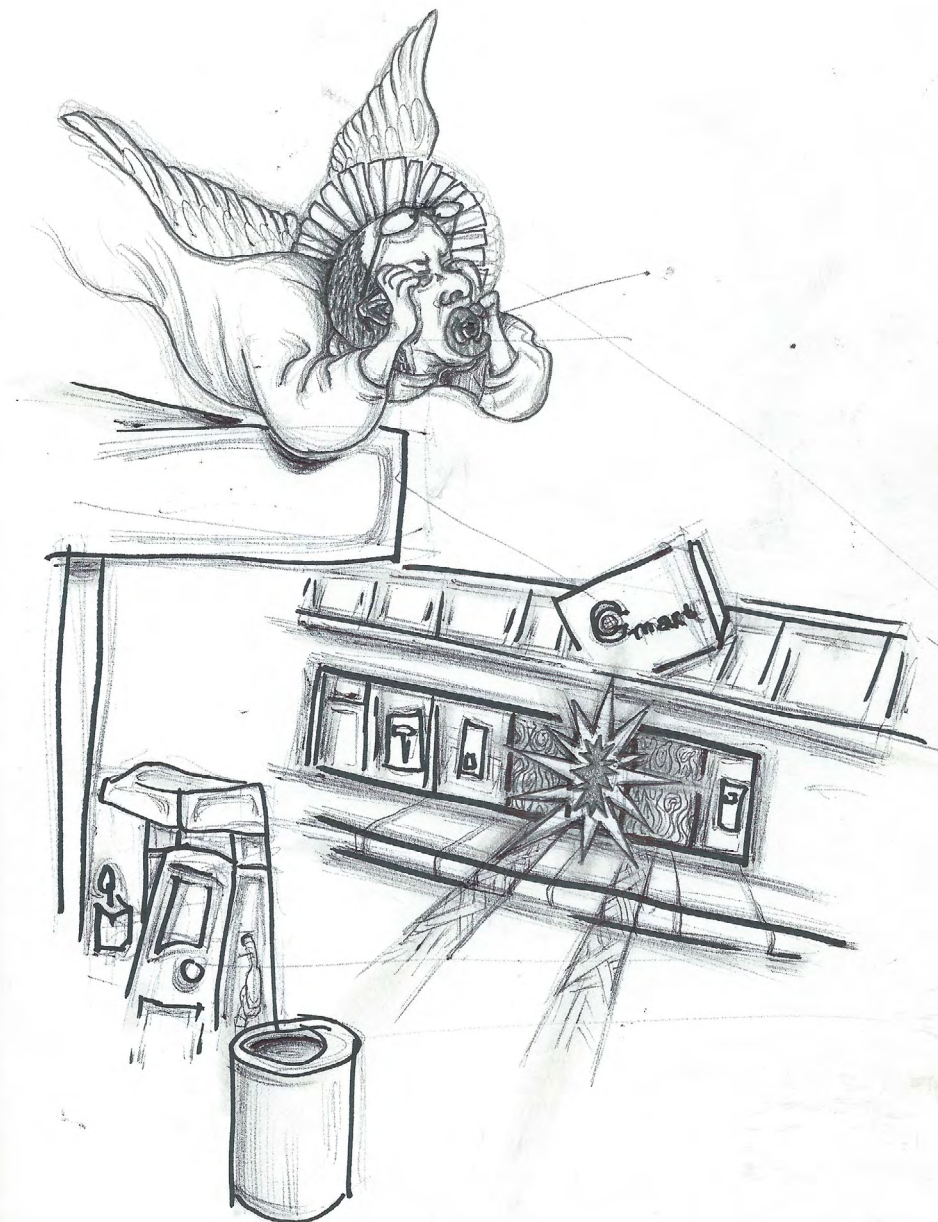


store.

I still go to the store. You have to. What else can you do? You can live without the store.

2010. From 'Near Death Experience'.

Aug. 26th 1999 #2,401



## ASSIGNMENTS FOR STUDENTS 3

### *Lead-In Activity*

1. What is non-conformism? Can you describe or give an example of a free-thinker who inspired a group of people or the whole nation?
2. What is consumerism? Would you consider yourself a part of modern consumer society?

### *While-Reading Activity*

#### **Comprehension:**

1. Identify the setting in both poems (time of day, place, speaker, addressee).
2. What is a purpose of going to the supermarket / store to the poets?
3. What family image emerges from Ginsberg's 'neon fruit supermarket' and Saunders' 'blood all over the walls and floor' store?
4. Who famous does Ginsberg see in the supermarket? Who are the typical customers in Saunders' store?
5. How does Ginsberg describe his poetic mentor, Walt Whitman? Why do you think Saunders lacks any mentorship?

### *Analysis*

1. Identify symptoms of physical discomfort in both poems. Are they associated with lack of artistic

inspiration?

2. Explain how the poets view the supermarket / store in terms of unconventional "food" for thoughts. How do you interpret the word 'neon' in Ginsberg's poem and 'nasty' in Saunders'?

3. Find examples and explain the usage of assonance and internal rhyming in "The Store". Which stylistic device dominates in Ginsberg's poem?

4. Why do you think both poets focus their attention on a stylistic device of enumeration? How does it relate with shopping list-making? What does such sentence pattern convey (disgust, pleasure, fatigue, cheerfulness, sarcasm)?

5. How would you state a mental and emotional condition of the poets?

6. Identify the moments of delinquency and breaches in norms of behavior in the poems. Do you agree that both poets are social outcasts of their time? Can you justify their acts of shop-lifting?

7. In the final stanza of Ginsberg's poem there is a famous mythological allusion? What does it represent? By contrast, why has Saunders' poem no references to the ancient past and roots firmly in the grim present?

8. How effective is free verse in the poems? Do the poems have resemblance to prose style? What distinguishes them from prose?

9. Which rhetoric questions do both artists raise? Can people live without stores?

**Lead-Out Activity**

1. Trace a half-century advance in American consumerist culture from Ginsberg to Saunders. Which values and ideals you consider be completely watered down, neglected?

2. Like a hotel, a supermarket / store is a part of our contemporary life. What is universal about them? How are check-in / check-out and cash-in / cash-out activities synonyms of transience of human lives?

Consider the metaphoric parallels established by the poems (the world as a supermarket / store).

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

### BRYAN LEWIS SAUNDERS

**1969** born in Washington D.C.

**1990** goes to prison at Lorton Correctional facility

**1992** homeless in Tennessee

**1993-1998** attends art school at East Tennessee State University with drawing professors Linda Coven, Ralph Slatton and Anita D'Angelis

**1995** begins lifelong daily self-portraits

**1998** experiments with colored lights

**2000** takes a vow of silence

**2001** hikes 600 miles on the Appalachian Trail, conducts the "Under the Influence" experiment, relocates to North Carolina where he has voluntarily committed to Brought State Hospital and then Country Time Village group home

**2002** lives with family in Appomattox, Virginia

**2003-2004** travels to China

**2005** returns to Tennessee and first begins performing Stand-Up Tragedy

**2006** records and releases Inner Demon Demos

**2007** conducts "Sensations" drawing experiment with Nicole Bailey, first European performances

**2008** publishes "Sex, Drugs and Institutions", performs, "Sign It!" and "Bed Bugs II", releases first sleep recordings on CD

**2010** performs with Lydia Lunch, Eugene S. Rob-



inson and Bibbe Hansen at the International Poetry Festival in Barcelona, Spain

**2012** conducts the "Third Ear Experiment"

**2013** exhibits with Basquiat, Damien Hirst, Witkacy and more "Sous Influences: Artists et Psychotropes" at la Maison Rouge in Paris, France. First solo show "Gregor Mendel Mutations" at Mika Gallery in Tel Aviv, Israel.

"Faceless" group show Museum Quartier (MQ21) Vienna, Austria, "The Third Ear Experiment" Gallerie HumuS, Lausanne, Switzerland, publishes "Authentic Soup Kitchen Menus", releases his sleep/dream magnum opus "The Confessor"

**2014** appears in the documentary "Art of Darkness" and Super 8 film "Self Portrait Portrait", "We Don't Need Another Doctor, We Can Run Our Own Tests" Mika Gallery Tel Aviv, Israel. "Sensations and Other Feelings" Washington D.C., Richmond, Virginia and Lausanne, Switzerland. Performs "Under the Influence of Torture" with John Duncan at LUFF, publishes "La Troisième Orville et Autres Textes"

**2015** exhibits with Vincent Van Gogh and Willem Van Genk "De Maakbare Mens" at the Dolhuys Museum Haarlem, Netherlands, performs "Daku" with Z'EV and James Hollenbaugh, "Human +" Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, stars in the short film "Trial Run"

**2016** "Drugs, Art and Society" Central European University Budapest, Hungary, retires from performing to focus on drawing.

Stacie Williams' worst enemy is Jason ?

June 8th, 2005 #5,632



## CONTACT DATA

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ПРОЕКТ ОЛЕГА КОЛЯДИ

# СУЧАСНА АМЕРИКАНСЬКА ПОЕЗІЯ #1

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