



untitled by christophe casamassima

UNTILTED

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I went to a fight the other night and a hockey game broke out.
—Rodney Dangerfield

I hope to become a rock.
—Edward Abbey

SINGLES COOKING CLUB SEEKS NEW MEMBERS,
ESPECIALLY MEN

for Karen Morrison

isn't it sad we use 'how fecund meant'
and not how it derived a foundation
of reality for 'it meant and meant it'
until it means with an ill-bent ease
'to throw out the baby with the proverbial
heart-wrenched sacking I took when
the boss flared her testicles and hesitated
to bind my wounds by the wayside'
and how the world screams her name
when the unzipped unmentionables go
for a hayride but this is the keeper
'what's the matter don't you like the smell'
she says and I say 'no but if I have to
tolerate this stench it had better come
from a good strong drink' and she says
'O baby you don't want to drink this
you'll never get up' and I tell her
I'm no more furtive than her exit wound

THE SPHINCTER OF MARXISM

for Kevin Hall

when I wipe my ass
with a page from Lowell—
“I hear him, stupor mundi, and the mud flies
from his hunching wings and beak—my heart...”

yes, when I lift that soiled page
and notice the result of last night’s musings—
veggie burrito with side of rice and guacamole—
in the shape of Lowell’s heart

IRREVOCABLE DIFFERENCES

for Heloise Chainsaw

he loves what you are and
deeply too but then adds:
“there’s no such thing as love, fool,”
and you retort, “why, yes, love,
just by saying so” so then I
take my hatchet and split
your skull open and, look,
nothing

SONNET FOR KAREN (LEAVING) THREE WAYS
for Andrew McKenzie & Chris Watson

Beneath seven AM beneath stars
at seven AM when you have awakened
I say to myself, "There is no other" and
"How do I know about the stars?"
I'm lying in bed next to you and my books
which are now a weather pattern, you
going down the stairs and I'm waiting
for the door to close gently, on my arm
you have awakened me from sleep to say,
"I love you. I'll miss you. Don't forget
your lunch." At seven AM you will walk
down the steps of my apartment and I
with a stiff smile will brush my teeth
until I hear the door close gently in my mind.

AMBITION & LOVE IN MODERN AMERICAN LITERATURE
for Ben Havilland

If a poem is written
and no one understands it
is it still a telephone?

THE ACTION MOVIE BAND-AID™ STUNT DOUBLE
MICROSOFT™ EXPANSION [RITUAL]
for Aaron Debruin

Imagine yourself a lone jet-fighter
or when Jen met Brad
because it rhymed, like,
it was sad, sad like
concubines, if sadness can be sexualized

HUMOR IN DOSTOEVSKY IN RELATION TO RACIST
INCLINATIONS IN AMERICAN HUMOR

for Adam Collison

Q How do you keep 19th Century Russian children from jumping on the bed

A Put starved, ferocious dogs on the ceiling

FAKESHIT
for Stephanie Potter

Shampoo

PUNCH / DRUNK / LINE
for Brian Truax

A philosophy walks into a bar:

“What’s your best drink?”

“Tequila shooter.”

Two people are the shortest distance between straight lines.

REPLY/REPLY ALL (HIT SEND)

for Nicole Casamassima

Both, I think, are
simply “hit,”
like a small
child who looks
you in the eye
and says, “I think
the world is
against me”.
Sometimes
the child is right.

YOKO ONO & JOHN CAGE EAT BALLOONS IN
WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK
for Geoffrey Gatzka

air or noise
move the air
and/or noise
however
no matter
how often
the matter
is settled

AM YOU
for Chuck Riley

I can see.
I can see.
He can say
I can see all I want

just as three
or four need
an object

p.s.

I am having
the time of your life

FALLING IN LOVE IN LOVE WITH YOU
for Benito Mussolini

The Italian undertaker
does not take my poems seriously

Because he wants a solid
definite pornography

Sometimes the Italian undertaker
does not want to be
the Italian undertaker

Sometimes
he wishes he was
a bird in the snow

The well hung Matterhorne
in my shoe

ONE MORE WAY TO LOOK AT LOVE

for Amy King

a field is more than
more than one
in many ways
its uses

ANNE'S EXTON
for Anselm Berrigan

Samson slew
a thousand of you
with the jawbone
of a dilemma

“I DON’T KNOW. YOU’RE PUTTING TOO MUCH
PRESSURE ON ME.”

for Becky Palmisano

The difference between
I and i
Is the end
Of indifference

More deferent than
Referent

“I am”

ROCK A BY
for Doug Mowbray

A thud is
a clamor once
the hammer
hits the water.

BAN
for William Allegranza

say “NO!” to fur

say “OH GOD YES!” to furry

MEDICINE MUSE
for Julia Randall, d. 2005

Medicine would not
allow me time
to misuse it

ZEN MEDICATION

for Matthew Klane

tai chi

then

chai tea

DEAR RUSH
for Dick Cheney

When you kill the pain
And the pain dies
Does it feel pain?

DEAR MISTER PRESIDENT, WHOEVER YOU ARE
for Rod Smith

tuber's pith
a ton of potatoes is, maybe six
skuthing
leopard his head at his
at first, it was O.K.
silo explosions

JACQUES DERRIDA, D. 10.09.004

*“The Lack of fixed meaning in a text did not keep
Mr. Derrida from publishing hundreds of books.”*
Washington Post, Sunday October 10th 2004

voice
is the juice
of its vigil

BHANGRA IN BAGHDAD

for Phillip Anthony White

when we used
to say
before the bomb
before detainment
before ethnic conflict
we meant it
when your ass
don't like something
it lets you know

HOLE POEM c. WASHINGTON, D.C.

for Buck Downs

The the the
the we took for granted
the hole they told us to “go up!”
it lost its novelty after the the
the face peeked in & said the “hello”

1999 IN THE 21ST CENTURY (BLUE, RED, BLUE-RED,
BLUE ON RED)
for Cartograms & Electoral Maps

only the edges touch me, their errors
digress in silence, does that profess
my allegiance?

HAIKU (FOR YOU KNOW WHO)

for C.A. Conrad

Meat & threat
don't rhyme.
But they should.

BEING VERSUS NON-BEING
for Barbara DeCesare

clitor is

but

cun't

HUMANISM
for Natalie Knight

“Remember how it felt to be human.”

HISTORIOGRAPH SODOMANDGOMORRHA

for Carol Quinn

they told the narrator to,
“literally”,
go fuck himself,
which seems,
in the wake of Lawrence v. Texas,
like the misrepresentation of a proper,
all American threat,
sticks & stones and all that,
the narrator
“literally”
wet his pants

IMAGIST POEM

for Deborah Poe

in case of elevator

do not use fire

A BUILDING, TO LOOK AT SEVERAL WAYS
for Edmund Berrigan for Rob Fitterman

this building grieves
in the sound of itself
falling

left alone in the wilderness
of this building

FABLIAUX
for Clarinda Harriss

she once wrote
“I feel you aesthetically only”
embracing my cloud

THE TRUTH
for Adam El Abd

No.
Nothing irritates me.
That's a lie, me lying
irritates me.
Poems make me heavy
with lies.

AVANT GARDE ISM
for mIEKAL aND

Beckett finds leaks in Baroque, Rococo pokes around
the outhouse, disguised as Iraq. In Brecht, Bach read
“Weapons of Mass Deconstruction.” In Bresson, a
sestina locked in a Bush.

POEM FOR FRANCESCA GIOIA-MCCARREN
for the McCarren Family

my fist
hitting your shin
was my first kiss

POEM FOR MUSLIM WOMAN WHO RETURNED
BOOKS THIS MORNING

for Palo del Colle, Bari, Puglia, Italia

every book feels
the same, yet
every book
remains false

POEM FOR BRIAN SPEARS

for Brian Spears

it's me

it's not

you

POEM FOR JAILBIRDS

for Jeff Morris

tin, tinged with
brine, every thought I made
thought I was standing

I was singing

IN TRUTH THERE IS WINE (EVERYONE IS
DIFFERENT EXCEPT YOU)

for Kevin Varrone & Pattie McCarthy

as I turned into the infinite
a bend in the road I shouted
my fireplace is on fire
“what the fuck is it”
bends in the mind
with people turning into
“I saw someone smile”
and swerved to hit them
in the mouth because
just because
there is truth coming
at me at lighter
than light speed they swerved
too and I
with my ass on fire saw
“you’re smiling in my mind”
I slowed my car
and my mind
asked is your fireplace on fire
so I swerved my car
into a bend in the road
I saw your ass swerve
in my car I leaned over
and put my hand in your eye
to see if you were smiling too

AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE YEAR OF THE
SAFFLOWER OIL

for Charles North

Why am I dead at the scrape of a letter?
At the Choptank drop of a hat? This
is a serious matter, one for the heart—

or a man of letters. Turning away from
the mezzotint effect of your longing, I
pine (for my own longing is opaque) and

dine at the hatchery. How long, asked
Bono, must we sing this song? With a
quaver in his voice and a rasp for a

life saver: I commend you upon arrival.
To the bath-house! This fish is starting
to stink! And my nerves! My nerves say

I love you!

RABBIT'S FOOT
for Gabe Havilland

it'll give you luck
if you don't fuck up

MAKE LOVE LIKE A DINOSAUR

for Julie Reiser

It
must
have been
difficult, slow
with all those
footprints,
sparrows, that
rear view mirror
and windshield
all aglow.

DRAFT
for David Truax

Writing this
like being

tied to a tree
unbecoming

as one unties
the aftermath.

Birds rest in
a bloodbath

and the birds
are silenced.

This, a voice
to sing with.

You, who are
my birdsong.

I WORK ALL DAY AND THEN I DREAM I DREAM I
WORK ALL NIGHT

for David Glover

It feels like I'm on
vacation when a
"hoarse" interrupts
the radio. Dick says,
"It's just a word,"
and falls back asleep.

EVERYTHING TRAGIC IS BETWEEN US
for Steve Dalachinsky

Anselm asked if I stood for benign insecurity and
I fancied him something bordering on the elegiac

When two people asked if I was going somewhere
the first looked puzzled and the other looked away

I propose to answer these questions in the order
they were taken but the space-time continuum

is all fucked up I mean considering who we know
and who we'll know later we're slated for error

Sheila asks really good questions but I'm too afraid
to answer she's got wanderlust and I can feel it in her

hands sometimes when I'm trying to make a move
away from aporia and the safe spaces of unconditional

What was I saying? The room I'm standing in and the
objects in this room and all the sad people in it staring

back waiting for me to answer the goddamned question
already but like I said I don't know and I don't care

“THERE IS NO ‘I’ IN TEAM.” “THERE IS NO ‘YOU’ IN
TEAM EITHER, YOU IDIOT.”

for Divya Victor

I’m sick of absolution and its syllabic equivalents
If only you’ll hand me my self I can tear it away
from your hands I hate your skyline I hate your tokens
What milk have you disrupting my proverbial issue?

A quatrain holds this violence best Beset with traffic
thinned outbursts Verbose I propose a toast
To your unwillingness to be defined I say nothing
You have made me disappear and reappear

in narratives Disdain the sentiment of presence
What is it about your boozecool attitude that makes
me the butt of every philosopher’s joke? You jest
I have returned with a quip of my own in the key of Me

SICK DAY

for Sarah Ames Kirby

Angered? Frustrated? Then
beat your brow! But as long
as I can sing to its pulse.

MOTHER IN THE AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION
for M. Magnus

I was in the war, *in* like
I was in the can, and Whitman's
poems opened on the American
plains, and then closed thereafter
when Modernism came.

PATERNITY LEAVE
for Carmine Casamassima

I always thought
it curious
how we say
“She is pregnant
with child” as if
to imply it could
be otherwise.

Women of the world:
I empathize
in your despair - for I,
too, am pregnant
with poems!

WRITING DEGREE ZERO

for Anthony Casamassima

our theories are like
hands milking the
cow of theory dry

MY DICK

for Nick Sokolow

When I realized
I was writing poems about asses
and neglecting the penis in all its glory
I decided it was necessary
to write a poem
about my dick

so this is a poem
about my dick

apologies for the brevity
of "My Dick"

LILACS

for Angela Fortezza

my grandmother cannot
will even
her own death

—so be it

the flowers
she fell upon
can only bloom again

TO LEAVE THE WORLD TO SOMEONE ELSE
for Kevin Thurston

if, to this day,
you cannot remember
where I got off,
please send for my things

SONNET (HOW I LEARNED TO STEAL BERRIGAN'S
COLLECTED)

for John Gioia

Someone who loves me calls me
to the radiant black & white
soft oceans of romantic mush.
My heart is confirmed in its pure Buddhahood
“the taste is pleasant, and the insane perfection, mild...”
later, drinking pepsi in my living room
Warmth comes, a slow going down of the Morning Land
Two hands, one writing, one holding on.
You string a sonnet around your fat gut
I mean it's all right here
in the already darkening East
I used to be the future of America
of this pilgrimage toward clarities
Now it's yours & now it's yours & mine.

STEVENS' CHALK

for Brandon Mollock

I don't believe in sidewalks
if a side-long glance
holds true to its other forms

in one life or
another, as I understood
it—a pupil of the eye
was nothing more than
a student of the mind

MENU
for Peter Baker

Eat well.

But be eaten willingly.

THE SONNETS
for Edward Abbey

Ted died at the end of his poems
(repeat 48 times)

Ted died, and I, alas, moved my bowels

DOLLAR, BILL (AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL POEM)
for Julie Fisher

I used to race horses
now I raise horses to the level of sadness's interest levels –
they sit on me for pleasure
pleasures I'll never know

AUBADE

for Paul Hendricks

when the leaves have fallen
all that is not grass is grammar
and returning to the branches
our thoughts climbing intersect
other thoughts have fallen
branching sentences without
syntax which leaves have
made a pile on the ground or
grass or lost in the sewers now
with the rain coming washing
away what we thought were
sentences and when we opened
our eyes it was summer again
looking to the clouds instead

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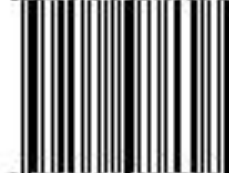
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