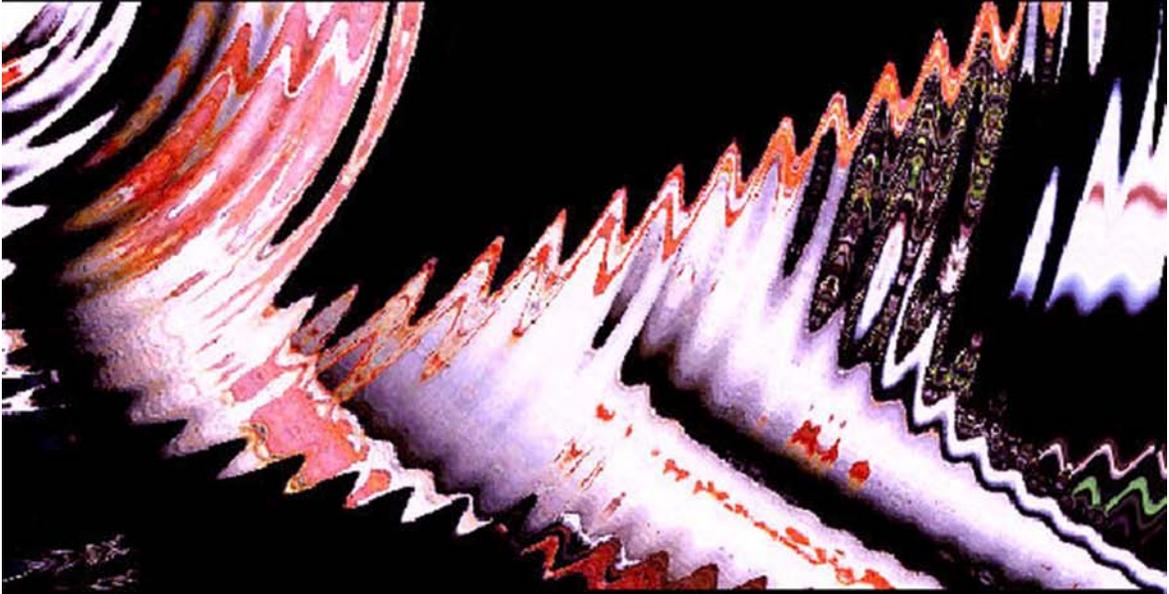




from *Series*

Magritte



mark young



from
Series Magritte

Mark Young

moria -- chicago -- 2006

Some of these poems have previously appeared
in *MiPOesias*, *Spore*, and *xStream*.

Most have appeared as posts on mark young's
Series Magritte, often in different versions.

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The Flavour of Tears

I am a plant
with new growth
said the bird

I am
the underside of
the caterpillar who feeds
on me

I taste my tears
as the caterpillar
eats them

Their memory
is etched
in my green flesh

I eat myself

It is exquisite agony

Homesickness

If these were
disparate objects
then their
juxtaposition might be
provocative

but here they share
a commonality, each is
equally out of place,
as in place as
the other.

If the lion
had the man's wings
this might be
allegory, the lion
a gryphon, a
mystical creature
as he who is now
Mister Commonplace
gazes out off the bridge
as people have done
ever since the
first tree

fell across
a stream. That
is the thing
about bridges,
wings or
no wings.

The lion
without a cage, the man
within one. Reality
is always
somewhere else. Only

the bridge exists,
hiding inside
the yellow fog
of melancholy.

The Seducer

The ship
the sea
is sailing on.

Birds
are made from
the air.

The house
we live in
is a
forest.

I awake
in my dreams
to find
I am only
awake in them.

The Betrayal of Images

Gödel said
that the
concept of a set
that contained
all sets
was impossible
because it
could not
contain itself.

Magritte said
that no
matter how
realistically
an object
was depicted
it could never
be
anything more
than an image
of itself.

In-
complete.
Agreement.

The Future of Statues
for Vincent Ponka

It was the
elegance of
the diving birds
that caught his
fancy. That,
& the fact the sea
was made
from stone. He
closed his eyes
& let the sky
stream over
him. The clouds
contained a
hint of snow.

Perspicacity

Start at the
end or
end at the start. Axolotls
made sense
only when salamanders
were discovered. Over
easy or overtime
inspiration
is still just
a spark in the air. In-
vent the axle
& the wheel
becomes a double-
decker bus, dragons
once were eggs. In
retrospect
it is easy to see
how life cycles.

The Empty Mask

If we give
objects
different names to those
they were made or
born with

are we changing
reality
or merely re-
arranging it?

If I
tell someone
that a chair
is no longer a chair
but now
a tuning fork

how can I
make them
agree with me

when they
already say
the sky
is sea & see
a forest as
the human body.

Laughter &
curtains
are interchangeable.

The Reckless Sleeper

At last! I'm glad to see
you've finally caught up
with the program. I've been
dropping hints for years
but for all the good that did
I might as well have been
pissing in the wind. Nothing
like smothering you with a
surfeit of symbolism. Over-
kill perhaps. But even that
mightn't have worked had I not
given you that book on Freud
for your birthday. Bet the
first thing you did was try
to find out just what sort of
sick bastard I was to
pull a stunt like that. I'd
watch you reading it &
caught by something look across
at me. Back to the book then
back to me again. & later
I sensed you pausing in the doorway
as I slept, indelicately picking
the desktop icons of my dreams
like newly opened flowers or
fresh field mushrooms. Tasting
them, smelling them. So tell me
what you really think of me
now that you know me better.

The Hunters at the Edge of Night

Usually he evaded the hunters
with little trouble. Only when
the dogs joined in
did he feel trepidation. They
spoke a different language. It seemed
more familiar to him
though at first he understood it
less. Finally he stopped running,
covered himself in mud &
became invisible. He learnt
the hierarchy of the dogs, the
patterns & cycles of their
behaviour. He killed the alpha male
just after the dominant female
came on heat then caught & coupled
with her. Now they hunt the hunters.

Homage to Mack Sennett

Transparency in all
things or concealing to
reveal. We see
what we imagine. By
placing a sheet
of glass in front of
a naked body
we cover &
uncover. A curtain
would conceal; but with the
under image overlaid upon it
it is revealing. Put
layer upon layer
then peel them away. The
placing is the stuff of
slapstick. Displacing is
pure eroticism. Décolletage.

Time Transfixed

It is the image that is
important
so
first paint
the painting
& then decide
what the
locomotive emerging
from the fireplace
might mean.

La Joconde

da
Vinc i
would be
pleased that
Magritte has
managed to
capture the
enigma tic
smile so
well .

Not to be Reproduced

Shown from the back the
subject is androgynous – think
k.d.lang in her man's suit
phase. It is a portrait of the artist
as a young (wo)man. It is not
a portrait of the artist. Magritte says
it is not to be reproduced
though he reproduces it
anyway. We do not see
the face. Magritte does not
produce it. Or reproduce it.
Is not reflected in the mirror
for what comes back from there
is not mirror-image
but reproduction. Almost as if
we were peering over a shoulder
only to see the shoulder that we
were peering over. But it is
reflection. The mantelpiece
is reflected & the copy of
Edgar Allen Poe's *Adventures
of Arthur Gordon Pym* that rests
upon it is partially reflected. It
is a book about an imaginary
journey. Magritte's painting
is a journey of imagination about
what happens between two points
that are the same point
though there is distance
between them. He says it is not to be
reproduced. It is reproduced here.

Le Seize Septembre

The
sixteenth
of september

was like
any other
day until

a tree
rose be-
hind the
moon

as
night
fell.

Personnage méditant sur la folie

Do we
reflect
on mad-
ness
or
do we re-
flect in
sanity?

The Black Flag

The memories react
to basalt, the machines
remain the models
they once were.

The Threshold of the Forest

In the march
of civilization
there may
come a time
when the
artificial forest
is indistinguishable
from the
natural city.

The Hereafter

There is no inscription on the tomb. Except for the tomb there is no inscription on the landscape. What will be written after is already written here.

The Human Condition (1933)

We
are one
with the landscape.

Bel Canto

He would stand
before the mirror &
practice the gestures of
song. Outstretched arms,
the slightly oval O
of the mouth, chin
down on the chest
but not inhibiting the
flow of air. More
the reverse, draining
the diaphragm just
as his teacher had
shown him. Get
the technique down,
she said, & then I'll
show you the notes
that flow from it.

À la suite de l'eau, les nuages

After the water, the
clouds. After clouds
the telephone. Then
the hope that
someone will hear it
ring. After the answer
the question. Who
picked the flowers?

The Happy Hand

The distances de-
fined. & by default
the spaces in
between. Balanced
relationships. Harmonic
intervals. Places
to put the fingers.
Some things taught,
something less
learnt. Practice makes.
Not perfect but im-
parts some form
to it. A semblance
of. A pathway there.

The Art of Conversation

A bull
in a state
of grace,
although
alert enough
to seem
alive. Birds in
silhouette, al-
most a word,
the land
above, the
sea below. A
pace behind
unseen &
silent, she stands
parenthesised
by columns
listening to
everything
they have
to say.

The Memories of a Saint

The theatre
in
the round

is
open to the
sky.

The sins
offstage.

The Use of Speech

Words mean
only
what you think
they mean. Others
may see them
differently.

Memory

Just as the
seasons & the sun
& the position of
the other
stars start
growth in plants
& birds to
fly to imprinted
destinations

so, too, do
anniversaries of
certain incidents
in the life
of Giorgio de Chirico
cause bells
to fall silent &
fall to earth.

Antiquities weep
blood. In the
Byzantine piazzas
of the labyrinth
pigeons pause
& whisper
Hebdomeros.

The Legend of the Centuries

The little chair
sits on
the enormous chair

even though
neither chair

is there
for sitting on.

Dwarfed by
la création
le créateur

or)

the Greeks
the Romans
will conquer.

Dangerous Liaisons

She held a
mirror up
to herself
then turned
away from it,
almost as if
this brief
liaison with
her own flesh
held too much
danger to be
confronted.

The Empire of Lights

Noisy birds silence
the trees. Someone
is reading as they
sleep. Against the blue
the house has braced
for night. Entrance is
gained through a door
in the roof. The pond
is full of stars. A street-
lamp echoes. The sky
is empty. Only clouds.

The Domain of Arnheim

How can
a giant bird

lay
such

small eggs?

The Art of Conversation

No chance
assemblage. Too much
structure in the
way the blocks
are stacked. Look
at the base. REVE is
real & not
a dream. Foucault
describes it
as a landscape from
the battle of the giants
against the gods;
but if that
is so then
someone has come along
afterwards &
tidied up. Added an
after word. Re-
written history.

Perspective II: Manet's Balcony

Whether it be
fête or
theatre

or just

sitting
on the balcony
watching
the funeral
parade pass
by

Manet
insisted

his family
always dress
to reflect the
occasion.

The Lovers

Memory does not
hold its
shape. Blurring
occurs. Always tricky
getting the light
right & how
much of the
initial energy signature
of love can be
retained? Things
change, return as
indifferent faces
in different
settings. What lasts
is how the lovers
shared a space, not
how they looked
at one another.

The Song of Love

Perhaps a
piscine Rodin
this mer-
couple made
from the same basalt
as the shore. They
could be
singing. Is this
the song
of love? (& again
the ship the sea
is sailing on.)

A scene
that does not
seem to sing of
anything except
the Byzantine archi-
texture of
de Chirico's
mind. A stage-set
for a theatre
of the absurd.
Pinned on a wall
a glove, a blank-
eyed bust. Green ball
in front, rooftop
in behind. & yet
this is the
siren song of
love that
fifty years before
made Yves Tanguy
jump from
a moving tram

that made

Magritte
say he saw
thought made visible
for the first
time. Making the
possible
improbable
but not
impossible. Pictures
within pictures.
Songs within
songs. Of
love. & other
strangeness.

The Alphabet of Revelations

Only in so far
as asemic
comes first

is the
alphabet of
revelations

arranged
alphabetically.

The Central Story

The hand
at the throat
that holds
the veil in
place. The small
euphonium. A
closed suitcase.
Death &
departure.

As a
reference point
it would be
hard
to go past
the central story
that the face
of Magritte's
mother
was covered
by her
nightdress
when
her body
was taken out
of the River Sambre
after her
suicide.

The Therapist

Putting in links
is a form of
cheating. It is
a way of letting
Magritte do
most of the
work. You give a
small misleading
glimpse, a kind of
precis without
the precision
of the original. Pre-
tend to read his
mind, inaccurately
fitting the painting
to your description
of it. Still the shill
from sideshow alley
though now you
work the avenue
in front of the
Gallery, promising
that inside will be
found creatures who
are half man, half
beast. & once the
money is collected
don't care that
small birds give
the game away.

The Therapist (revisited)
for Nick Piombino

I know that
asking you to lie down
on the couch while I
sit across from you
is a bit old-fashioned
but humour me, it comes
from doing my studies
in Vienna. The bag
beside me contains a
peregrine falcon whose
purpose will become clear
later on. The wall behind?
A piece of trompe l'oeil
I asked this Belgian painter
to do for me. The sea is
so soothing. It's where
we all came from, it's
where we all desire
to return. Why? Think
amniotic fluid, think your
mother's lullabies. & the
birds inside the cage? At
first they're something
for your mind to focus on
while I explore the skies
they used to fly in. As we
progress, I gradually get
you to transfer to them
all the concerns that keep
you planted in the earth.
When that is done we set
them free. The final act
is to release the falcon.

The Age of Enlightenment

I took it to be
the effect of altitude
on particles of
light. Their
reaction to it.
The young were
not so sure. Spoke
of signs,
of revelations. Un-
able or unwilling
to accept
that even when
the air is thin
the aspects of a face
can have a
separate gravity.
The balloon
I offered up as
proof that hot air
rises. They understood
that. Enlightenment
is of an age. Is
not an Age of.

Familiar Objects

Floating objects are a common enough theme in the paintings of Magritte. Overdone it could almost be said; but not quite since suspension requires a suspension of belief, & each painting is refreshed & refreshing, creating its own unique atmospheric pressures, a re-awakening of surprise. Here we have a singular form seen from multiple aspects; & in the air the singularity of multiple objects that have no right to be there, held in suspension by a single held-in breath.

The Pleasure Principle

A corona of light
like an un-
glasses light bulb.

Un sighted.

Seeing what
the sitter sees.

Alighting
at this
precise
moment
of space
this precis
of time.

Taken &
being taken.
The sitter
unseeing.

Unseen.

A moment
of insight
as we
who are
un-
seated

are taken

into a
space of time
we cannot
see.

Excited
&
anticipating pain.

The Lost Jockey

The photosynthesis machines
are down. Chlorophyll
is in short supply. Each tree
left only with the exposed
neural pathways of a
single leaf; but cauterised
by cold these are excised
from all external stimuli. Un-
able to smell the snow
or touch each other or
taste the passage of
this horse & frantic rider. The
forest is full of trees who
cannot see they're there.

Eternal Evidence

The curve
of the jaw-
line is
the motif
that follows

the slightly
misaligned
body
down
past
the breasts

past the eye
of the navel
& thatch-
work triangle
of the crotch

to where
kneebone &
tibia top are
parallel
patterns
above
the final
amputation.

The feet
stand alone.

The Liberator

I have always thought
of the subject as
Italian. The patriarch of
a transported family, sugar
cane growers in North
Queensland, the first here,
able to speak a little
English, his wife far less
because she never mixed
outside the community. He
is a picture on the wall
or a watcher at the festival
parade, no breath left
to play the tuba in the
marching band, no longer
able to keep in step
with a step he never really
was in step with. Eyes
on an embellished past as a
diminishing present passes by.

*

I see echoes of my father
also. Non-Italian. Freemason.
The attache case with the regalia
hidden inside, the pearled
candelabra reminding me
of jewels & embroidered
aprons. He never talked to me
about it. I never asked. He
never talked because I didn't
ask. I never asked because
he never talked about it. Round
& round. We never came close.

*

Never a liberator. Quite
the reverse. A tight hold
on the family. Rationed
freedom. We escaped by
becoming birds or keys or
pipes or wineglasses. Every-
day objects that could always
be replaced. He never
noticed. The space inside
the outline is as it has always
been, a shadow of himself, how
he'd always seen us. The
eyes in the pearled lorgnette
are mother's eyes. She is
held tightly. A second cane.

Attempting the Impossible

Trains weren't
invented
when they built
a railway between Bradford
& London. Leonardo
was designing airports
before he thought
about flight. The
model arrived
only after
Magritte
had painted her.

Carte Blanche

“Visible things
can be in-
visible,” said Magritte
about this painting. “If
somebody is
riding a horse through the
woods, at first you see
them & then you
don’t. But you know
they’re there. I
make use of painting
to render thoughts
visible.” Then he
galloped off
leaving the rider
hiding the trees &
the trees hiding her.

Comparative Studies

Put one or
more things side
by side or one
within the other. For
the first it is
the space between
that makes the
magic, the juxtaposition
of things known
to create the unknown. &
yes, Isador Ducasse, I
hear you laughing
in the background. It is
a collision that marks
the start of a new
journey. The in-position
is continuity, an egg
for a bird, or confusion
when something is
given an entirely different
name to that we
usually ascribe to it. Is the
briefcase labelled sky
to be our travelling
companion or the cover
under which we
set out on what
began a journey
& is now a vestibule?

The Giantess
(after Baudelaire)

In those times when
Nature couldn't
get enough of it,
spitting out
on a daily basis
children who were
literally monsters, I
would have loved
to have lived
near a young giantess
even if it meant
the only way to
dampen my desires
was to insinuate myself
around her ankles,
a frotting cat at the
feet of a queen. That way
I could take part in
whatever perverse games
she played, could see
her body & soul thrive
on the freedom she
found in them, tell
if her heart hid some
dark flame, if that mist
that swam across her eyes
was tears or the
humid warmth of
pleasure. & as a cat
I could be leisurely
in my exploration
of her body. It was
magnificent. I'd
gently climb the slope
of her knees, taste
her thighs, tangle my claws

in the thicket of her
pubic hair. & sometimes
in summer, drained
by the sun, she would
stretch herself out
across the countryside
& I would risk the
crossing of her belly
to sleep below her breasts,
in their shadow, a
peaceful village at
the foot of a mountain.

Intermission

Peace
is popularly
supposed to be

the
period between
two wars. Let's

hope
then that
the actions of

those
who invaded
Iraq or blew

up
Atocha Station
were parts of

the
final act
of a tragedy

&
not part
of the intermission.

Golconda

An image such as this
might have been
what the Poynter Sisters
had in mind when they
sang *It's raining men,*
Hallelujah. Or maybe
it was that other song
of their's called - was it? -
Creole Lady Marmalade
with its refrain of
voulez-vous couchez avec
moi, ce soir & they were
working on the principle
that if you ask enough people
sooner or later some/body's
bound to come across
even if it is only
an anonymous Mr Average
in a mass-produced bowler hat.

The Listening Room

An apple
on the table
is no threat; but
walk into a room
to find it
filled by a
giant apple...

*

Had gone
to write "the apple
peers out the
window". Wrote
"pears" instead. A
slight tectonic drift
of associated words
done accidentally &
unconsciously.

*

Magritte's
placement of objects is
deliberate, is earth-
quake territory. The
displacement of space
by things that should
not be there
but are seemingly
quite at home.

*

Maldoror in whom I dream apples.

*

Only a painter
could place
this giant object
in a space where
the entry
place & space
is so small.

*

Cliffs, chasms. A
precipice pre-
cipitated by the
unexpected. It is why
even in the light
we fear closed doors
& rooms that
may not be empty.

*

How large the tree?
Who picked the apple?

*

There are no
eyes. How then to
tell in
what direction
it is facing. The
apple appears
to be looking
out the window. Small
wordplay. All
the room
that's left to
manoeuvre

in. There
are no ears.

*

What is it
listening for ?

The Secret Player

for Jukka-Pekka Kervinen

Master Class in that
a group of us
are brought together
& once we've finished
demonstrating our skills
are then shown
how it should be
done. Jukka as ice-white
tennis pro, serving up aces
while we watch on
amazed at the ease
with which he works the
court. Ice-blue, ice
as prism through which re-
flects/refracts all
colours, through which
neutrino words pass
to form ice crystals
sharp as stone, light as
lattice. Secret player
in that I have slim
sense of him outside
his poems, in that
the game he plays is far
beyond that which the
rest of us call tennis.

from: The Cicerone

To end
a solar eclipse
the priests take a
young boy who has
fewer than ten
gold tokens
on the wall
of his family home,
wash him with water
from their private spring
& clothe him
in unbleached linen
which is
woven from flax
harvested near the sea.

He is given peyote.
He is laid on the altar.
He stares at the sun with dull eyes.
He sees darkness
before the darkness is seen.

A sunflower is
placed to replace his face.

We are gathered, watching.

We know what is to happen.

We know what is to happen

then.

As the moon
starts its
slide onto the sun
a brazier is lit. As it

continues to drift
twelve torches
set in a circle
around the altar
are set alight. & as
the moon
passes fully
across the sun
hiding it
like an apple
poised before
a man's face
a priest wearing
the skin of an ocelot
which marks him
as coming from
the same family
slices the boy open
from throat to un-
descended testicles,
rips out his entrails
& casts them
into the brazier.

It is done quickly. The
boy's heart is still beating.

It is done so
we hear the spatter of wet flesh

just before
a fingernail of light shows

the sun is being born again,
the boy is dead.

The Empire of Lights (1967)

For the
nineteen years
between her husband's
& her own
death, Georgette Magritte
kept this painting
on an easel in
what had been
their shared house. How
hard it must have
been for her
knowing that after
their forty-five
years together
she could have
finished it off for him
with barely a break
in the brush strokes.

Mark Young, a New Zealander now living on the Tropic of Capricorn in Australia, has been publishing poetry for more than 45 years. His work has appeared in a wide range of print and electronic journals in many countries.

His books include *New Zealand Painting, 1950-1967* (1968), *Blues for New Lovers* (1969), *The right foot of the giant* (1999), *The Oracular Sonnets* (with Jukka-Pekka Kervinen)(2004), *calligraphies* (2004), *Sun Moon's Mother* (2004), *Poles Apart* (with Jukka-Pekka Kervinen) (2004), *The Cicerone* (2005), and, as co-editor with Jean Vengua, *The First Hay(na)ku Anthology* (2005). A new collection, episodes, will be out soon.

In addition to his mark young's Series Magritte blog, on which most of the poems collected here first appeared, he also maintains a primary blog, pelican dreaming. He has an author's page at the New Zealand electronic poetry centre.