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**la reata**



# **LA REATA 7**

Edited by  
**ARIEL BELLER**

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**No. 7. August, 2010.**

# **LA REATA**

**Edited by ARIEL BELLER**

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## **REVIEW OF THE GREAT ENGLISH SUPERTAX**

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**Price £3.00 Annual subscription  
(irregular) £11.00**

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Panchromatic Books**

To break the lovely form of metrical verse, and dish up the fragments as a new substance, called vers libre, this is what most of the free-versifiers accomplish. They do not know that free verse has its own nature, that it is neither star nor pearl, but instantaneous like plasm.... It has no finish. It has no satisfying stability, satisfying for those who like the immutable. None of this. It is the instant; the quick.

**-D.H. Lawrence**

When there is so much to be known, when there are so many fields of knowledge in which the same words are used with different meanings, when every one knows a little about a great many things, it becomes increasingly difficult for anyone to know whether he knows what he is talking about or not. And when we do not know, or when we do not know enough, we tend always to substitute emotions for thoughts.

**-T.S. Eliot**

Every true work of art – and thus every attempt at art (since things meant to be similar must submit to one standard) – must be judged primarily, though not exclusively, by its own laws. If it has no laws, or if its laws are incoherent, it fails – usually – on that basis.

**-John Gardner**

Aesthetic Law and Artistic Mystery

Various critics have done me the honour to interpret the poem in terms of criticism of the contemporary world, have considered it, indeed, as an important bit of social criticism. To me it was only the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life; it is just a piece of rhythmical grumbling.

**-T.S. Eliot on The Wasteland**

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When I've aroused universal horror and disgust, I shall have conquered solitude.

**-Charles Baudelaire**

*1897*

If the world is composed of suffering, this is because it is, essentially, free. Suffering is the necessary consequence of the free play of the parts of the system. You ought to know this; you ought to say it.

**-Michelle Houellebecq**

*1997*

For a man who wants to make a profession of good in all regards must come to ruin among so many who are not good. Hence it is necessary to a prince, if he wants to maintain himself, to learn to be able not to be good, and to use this and not use it according to necessity.

**-Niccolò Machiavelli**

When you provoke in others a mixture of horrified pity and contempt, you will know that you are on the right track. You can begin to write.

**-Michelle Houellebecq**

*1997*

## A CASE SECOND OF YOUR H(E)A(R)T CURIOUS

If you find it as easy  
to misplace your hat  
as your wallet

If you always drink alone  
to the tune  
of a heart beat

When the barman says  
nothing but looks at  
your case knowingly

then it's time to blow to  
suck a second to  
haul your skinny ass

down Broad Street  
limping west squinting, crying  
to the sun curiously

the only thing in your case your suit

## I WROTE TO THE LIBRARY TO COMPLAIN

I wrote to the library to complain  
that their New York poetry items  
by Fuck You Press  
(incl. A Poem for Cocksockers)  
and the issue of Strange Faeces on anal sex  
had all been defaced by Library stamps  
and that items such as these  
that have risen to the status of artworks  
(in their own right)  
should be treated with more respect.

**JOHN MCFARLOW**

**IF I CAME TO A GARDEN AFLAME**

inside a train knifing the bay moon  
as things expire that cannot be

as trucks backed up at my entry go away  
despite the carp's power I have put my time off the table  
as I so fall into the core whittled out by fire  
withered outward has unbuckled my mind disguise  
I am the street now and it is a man of me  
but I flipped out playing flute and the world  
I am I, focused to the original  
and I am gone forth from the individual  
my reality story climb on me  
then I change in the repeating terminus  
I feel the stormed over birds and the moon standing alone

**ALL PRISONS ARE ESCAPED, LUSH ORCHARDS, THE END**

a horse moves outside a retainer  
as a man running exhibits of bear, near enoughts proceed  
and you have to allow some give

the moon says he is me and I do not argue  
everything has multiple origins  
the days here wander out and claim me  
but I, a raspberry hair of lakes written longhand  
night without light in it, dreams of himself as a man running in a  
bandana, sweaty  
release seen in raspberry hairs and a lake of waves

I have done the dance, taken the stage  
turned myself outside and made this into everything  
now my caravan is carrying only replacements  
the reason of me was never told  
in the green quiet of every glide, every stride  
every soft glade where you seek to hide

aren't we now known past names  
speak of dead in first person or I leave  
air of night breathe in the windows of a barn  
migrating eagles in useless beauties  
muddied dance of things that are barely

all me and my past in triangle  
piles of joys that say nothing  
shelves of old ways and no one saying anything  
to explain in layman's terms the jacket of death

water laughs as it falls, you are more perfect  
there was never a prison nor a prisoner contained  
a million of leaves covers the earth

we are scratching here, among the earth's remains

layered acts, as a foot prints in settling tree hands  
scarlet layers of pods underfoot, scarlet tracks

murderous me waves of coffins with forgotten ends smoking  
precious in a militancy of sun, ramble flowers along alley ways  
the perfectly stated rain on the sand

I hardened awaiting perfect light, beauty in fire  
but the face of the days ripped away into winter

millions of our days in the mushy middle  
the riot of things that are too small to say  
the tallest bell of wild puddles that jury our welding salmon threads

peaceful shamanic turtle simple time of your life  
before cold sciences where nuts and bolts break  
wakening turtles under, I wish to be a song bird  
among refreshingly dumb swans, kismet dradle kite

I plan to be a tornado and then never return  
snake bordering on vines, walls of shut fields, no where for the antelope to go  
or the nevering thing, a bell night, sprinting mint  
dead leaves will come together under us  
among millions of small deer crossing the lit street  
a weasel is crawling among lights  
the moon in a lonesome groove closing over, dawns of field  
there are mustard seeds that have no way

I will make meanings of the dumbest statements  
the hold overing of not saying anything

bings like cobras cross by, zebras pounce on water

## ARE THE PEOPLE REAL OR NOT?

This bloke who smells like battery acid next to me,  
he turns  
to me  
looks down  
at my body  
and he coughs,  
a nice chesty volcanic one  
where you hear the crack of phlegm in his throat  
and I feel the whip  
of hot sick breath on my arm

-what's he carrying?  
the syph? the AIDS? any of the cancers?

then he looks at me  
as his palm wipes his mouth slowly  
from one sticky side to the other,  
his eyes useless  
with no emotion

so there was no spite  
in what he did,  
he knows not what he did  
and I can't  
twat him one.

**FOR £5.45 AN HOUR**

Just a fucking cockroach of a woman  
waving a pack of mince at me  
wailing 'Get us another one,  
this one's outer date!  
so I go the other end of the shop,  
get one and take it too her,  
she screeches 'Argh, this one's only  
til the tenf a Feb-roo-airy,  
aven't yer got anything a bit later??'  
so off I go again,  
get another one,  
come back again,  
she looks and says, 'This one'll do,'  
and marches out with her  
prickly-faced cockroach husband,  
the bottoms of their trackie pants  
dragging, brown and shaggy,  
leaving a piss smell  
still in my nose

then the security bloke comes  
charging at me,  
'They didn't pay for tha mince!'  
he rattles my blue blue collar  
'THEY DIDN'T PAY!'  
and legs it out after them,  
cutting the piss smell  
in two,  
like the jaws  
of a crummy painting of hell  
they creak  
as they close on me.



**A**bout two years ago, a magazine out of Birmingham, 'WRITER'S NEWS', sent me this questionnaire. They're reply was that since I offered no subscription information they were unable to do a full piece, i.e. they were unable to print the following. Me thinks they simply didn't like my answers.

## **WRITER'S NEWS**

***What are the key features of your magazine?***

There are none.

***Are you looking for poetry/prose in any particular style?***

No.

***How much material do you like to receive at each submission?***

Give me 6 tries at the poem. That should be enough for me to decide if I want to be your friend. And if you try the short story, I like to have a 2<sup>nd</sup> one to look at. There is no word limit exactly but I'd have trouble printing anything over 8000 words.

***Do you prefer writers to leave a gap of weeks/months before submitting their next selection of work?***

This appears twice a year if I'm lucky. Some writers submit every couple months and their work tends to gather in a pile, largely ignored. Submitting your best two times a year is the best way to get noticed.

***What do you most like to see in submitted work?***

What passes for modern poetry is often just long-winded descriptive bull, so I like anything with a bit of dance or gamble to it; no more poems about the goddess with a goddamn butterfly between her lips...

***What do you least like to see?***

- Poetry centred in the political is not poetry at all but propaganda.
- Poetry written to be performed crosses the line into performance art, which puts you more in league with the stand-up comedian.

- Poetry centred in nationalism and/or ethnicity is inherently insular.

***Do you use any other freelance contributions?***

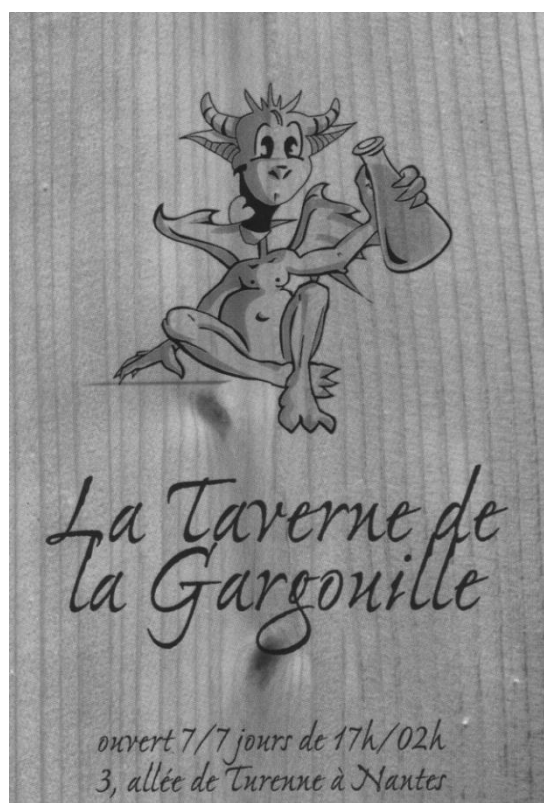
JPEGS containing artwork, photography etc are considered.

***What is the best advice you can offer to would-be contributors?***

Read contemporary literary journals so you can see how low the standard is.

***Please give details for buying single copies/subscribing.***

Copies are free to contributors with more upon request. As *La Reata* is very has and when, no one really subscribes unless they're say, the Department of Special Collections at the University of Wisconsin. Back issues are available at £2 and can be requested at the website: [www.lareata.info](http://www.lareata.info)



**DEMAGNETIZED HAND**

Demagnetized hand  
still points blankly to north.  
A tram still skirts the Ring  
at midnight. And the forehead lines  
of the Cardinal Albergati keep watch  
over the city where I

finish my second glass, one too little,  
pocket the change – and by dawn,  
will perhaps  
still  
be.

**QUIT**

Haven't smoked a cigarette in 7 days.  
All thought and senses and nerves amped up and highly sensitive.  
Like a cat on acid.  
And like a wild elk with massive horns in a small apartment.

I feel like some horned forest god of fertility and abundance.  
I have scratched and dented the fake wood floor with my hooves and  
busted up the bathroom ceiling with my antlers.  
There is cum and fur all over the place.  
And I stand there panting, looming.  
A dark figure with glowing eyes.  
Growling as I breath deeply.  
Perched on top of the refrigerator I can hear  
every human, insect and animal outside scurry past.

## I WAS NEVER SEXY ENOUGH FOR THE 1980'S

I was never sexy enough for the 1980's  
(or psychotic)  
to encompass all chaoses in one body

could never scream softly enough  
for the homicidal dawns

was not renowned enough  
to climb classical facades  
or jump off

was not loved enough  
to stand alone  
in empty streets

or strong enough to bewitch  
the bland epic of life

into one  
that one  
could want

I will try any device  
to translate this  
some of them will fail

not female enough to  
avoid marauding languages,  
gods and dialects splintered my teeth

I did not have the courage to spit back  
and all the outdated role-playing games  
were wider than me.

## THE HAUNTING

Am i the only homeless person here?

(or like the others ignorant of lovecraft)  
do not send me away, because the dead  
years are dearer than life

and the faces in the wallpaper  
that hides the suicide room  
speak louder than any special effect

let me spend the night with your psychoses  
laughing as invisible demons pound on the wall

lead me in the dark to the winding stair  
that buckles and shakes until i fall  
and waits for another, and leads nowhere



**ROBERT YATES**

## OPHELIA'S LAST LAUGH

Nunnery?

That ain't what you said in the throes of whatever  
When you wheedled and whined and begged for surrender  
And told outrageous lies about the size of your member  
*"Come on, I'll be gentle and skilful and tender"*  
Then you lasted five minutes and cried straight after  
And wouldn't stop whispering the name of your mother...

When you'd recovered you swore me to secrecy  
(To preserve that essential veneer of virginity)  
Then you read me some lines of your godawful poetry  
And banged on and on about Stoic philosophy  
Night after night in this fashion you pestered me  
'Til one day I noticed the first flush of pregnancy

Which, by the way, was the time you decided  
To sod off to Uni, which left me divided:  
Yes, on the one hand, I was bloody delighted  
But your swelling seed was implanted inside me,  
Making it harder and harder to hide it  
With loose-fitting garments and standing behind things.

Lucky for me, then, the death of the old king  
Brought you straight back, dressed in black, mad and moping  
And your outburst allowed me to set about faking  
My death: so I grabbed a lady-in-waiting  
With a passing resemblance, and took her out boating  
And drowned her, and left her in some of my clothing...

I delivered the baby, a boy, by myself while  
Everyone else was attending the burial,  
And I watched from afar as, unhinged and maniacal,  
You arrived and insisted you had loved me after all  
Then fought in the trench with my brother – just typical!

It's all about you at my own fucking funeral!

So I fled to the coast with a pile of my father's cash  
And hid on a boat filled with bear furs and whale fat  
Then dashed to the nearest dashing young royal chap  
And said "*Hey, it's me! We met at a party last  
Spring, you recall? You were drunk and you made a pass –  
Meet your son and heir. Let's talk about wedding plans!*"

So screw you, Prince Hamlet, 'cos I've had the final laugh  
I'm queen and you're dead,

Signed

*Mrs O. Fortinbras.*

**IN THE CROSS WALK WHEN THE LIGHT TURNS RED**

You and your big diphtheria crises  
coming for to carry me to battle  
crosstown traffic, the ballistic fragments  
gathered up in yellowed sheets of newsprint.  
After a sniff or two tells it the truth  
a dog will move on to other questions;  
we're the ones who worry after bones.  
And to what end but a strophe of madness  
bound in a volume with a long title  
that overstrains the substance of its comments.  
Dost thou mock me, sir? Well sure – how else find  
where yesterday's cheese now lingers. In time  
there will be no fake Rolexes only  
a sundial pounded into your forehead  
for the benefit of former lovers  
as they do what always had to be done.

**THE POLICE****A PUPPET PLAY – INSIDE THE AUTHOR’S MIND**

Author: Is there anything to cannibalise?

3 Policemen together: What!

Author: Cannibalise!

3 Policemen: A cannibal Isle?

Author: Yes, cannibalise...

3 Policemen (dressed as Gauguin maids): Bananas, bamboo, sea...

The Emperor Porcelain: Did anyone say cheese?

3 Policemen: (querulous) What?

The Emperor Porcelain: Cheese!

Author: No!

The Emperor Porcelain: (wearing an apemask) I thought someone said there was cheese. (stretching) I do like some cheese first thing in the morning.

3 Policemen: Bananas, bamboo, sea. Under the shade of a Palm tree, coconuts.

## WALKING

I saw the young man  
bent over with his arse up in the air.  
I also saw the can of beer  
on the floor.  
As I walked past him  
I realised he was talking to a friend.  
'Clothes do not maketh the man.'  
he said.  
I walked past him  
and then he began to shout at me.  
'Hey, mate.'  
I ignored him.  
'Hey you in the blue shirt.'  
I turned around.  
'Clothes do not maketh the man do they?'  
'No you are right mate. Clothes do not maketh the man.'  
And I carried on  
walking.

**BELIEF**

As I passed all the Jews  
they were nodding  
and swaying their heads.  
Some had a small book in their hands.  
It was held open  
and they pointed it  
towards  
what I thought was the east.  
They did not even look at me  
as I walked past  
with my small suitcase.  
Then I remembered  
the plane I had just passed.  
It had a star of David on the side.  
Maybe they were praying to the plane.

**WINE**

I got out of my car and opened the door.  
One of my two bottles of wine fell to the floor and smashed.  
I looked at the small river of wine as it trickled down the drive.  
I also looked at all the smashed glass on the floor.

I could not move for quite some time  
I just stood there looking at the wine  
and the glass.  
I had never broken so much as a bottle of beer before.

I went to get another bottle of wine.  
I could not go to the same place.  
So I went to another and got another bottle of wine.  
Then I went home.

**THE SECRET ADVENTURES OF BERNADETTE**

all my born days I've  
felt like a case of mistaken body parts  
but to my heart it's you  
the day the phone rings  
and Marie answers and says  
while looking at flowers near the post office  
you broke your foot  
how British of you!  
quand allons-nous nous voir enfin?  
tho I can only guess  
just like at the battle of Atlantis  
when it went under  
you'll still be coming to visit  
and to sit at a table  
and stare at oysters with me

## WHY MEDITATION HAS NOT TAKEN OVER THE WORLD

mostly, the suburbs of phoenix  
denying chakras unaware and loving  
then, versatility of a ratchet set, neck tattoos  
and pre-emptive counter arguments  
against why shower chanting remains a solitary experience  
so we are before us, so we will be after  
notes brought in penguin's mouths  
we change from the thing to the clock before  
the bursting calamus waters  
a few people who adore, we cannot be here through corrections  
that together is not in measure, any more than a hurricane  
photo-guy digging a hole to get the shot  
trails by our fur into the deeper wood  
we the very ancient, answer the tooth necklace  
so we bear the time, beyond the bee under  
doom the hill before a knowing of time  
because if we were open to the nature of time  
we would never have built casket homes on the hills of islands  
when so little separates us from the horse  
that we call wisdom of ghosts  
and parachute to the open arms of the other

## THE LAST GREEN FRONTIER

In Missouri, in the Current River, the eels nibbled at my feet. It was breeding season and they hovered against the flow in ankle deep water. Later I got stoned with her father by the campfire and was frightened of myself. At night we slept in our tents on the stones by the river and everything was wrong. Someone had killed a turtle.

Like so many other things in my life.... this travelling thing with a girl was something I had dared myself to do. It needed to be done, considering where we'd come from, and this is how consequence bites your head off. After those three days on the river my point of view turned over into a handful of negative but concrete beliefs. I'd decided the final answer was.... you're not compatible with this system.... and, these ideas of yours to break the barrier have become a sad joke.

Once we hit Illinois I began to have the same dream every night. A stone Buddha would hover before me – the volume of thousands of voices would go from murmur to clamour – then implode into a thousand glassy pieces. But the sound: a dull pop, would stick in my brain like a hook. When we started heading west the dream stopped. It was replaced by a series of refrains. You are completely, irreversibly, on your own. Where do you go from such a deserted place.... you go nowhere.... you've been misinformed. Though once you had a location, a time, an idea, you're stuck precisely where you are. This is no place at all.

When Matt said he'd come to New Orleans with the rest of us I thought: Good, now he can see it too. He'll see why I don't speak nearly as often as I used to. Or maybe his experience will differ from mine. When Zane said he'd come I wasn't surprised. Zane was I like I used to be. He didn't care where he lived or who wasted his time.

One month earlier I'd arrived with a girl named Molly in a blue beaten four-door Pontiac. We came without notice. I'd called Matt from Illinois, pretending to be in New Orleans. I wanted to make sure, if only from the tone of his voice, that it would be as life as usual when we got there. Four days later we knocked on his door. And he laughed.

It was June and we sat down on his couch. He barely noticed Molly. He told us how he'd been gardening, mowing lawns mostly. His back ached and he could run a business five times better than his fat old fool of a boss. We

listened with ears muted by a thousand miles of highway. He agreed we could stay there a couple months. He said he'd buy me a drink and Molly wanted to see some of the city before sundown. We walked to the Commodore.

We were in the backroom playing pool when I began to notice how Matt and Molly interacted. They were passionate, these two, Jewish, and they liked their metaphysics. They were digging into a conversational argument on human behaviour, when I became almost entirely blocked up. I could hear, see, feel; but nothing registered. Nothing moved me from my point of reference which was no reference at all. Everything I said felt wrong. The way I moved felt wrong, or at least, open to debate. No one seemed to notice. And I needed another drink. They gave me cash for another round. When I came back I sat their drinks in front of them and went to my seat. I hated myself like this. Useless, dependent, lost.

'Hey Knave!'

'Yeah.'

'We got an idea but we need your help.'

'Oh yeah how's that.'

'You still have your tent.'

'It's in Molly's car.'

'Zane doesn't know you're here yet so I think we should play a trick on him.'

'Like what.'

'I don't know exactly but I think we should take advantage of the fact he has no idea you're here.'

'What about the tent?'

'It's just an idea but what if he came home and found the tent pitched in the living room. You and Molly would be naked inside and you'd be fucking. He'd come in the door after work and see a tent in his living room and hear people fucking inside and I'd be sitting on the couch watching T.V. What do you think? Molly likes the idea. She says she'll fuck for a joke.' I eyed Molly. I knew damn well she wouldn't mind. I thought the idea was pretty stupid myself. It was one of Matt's random acts of perversion. And Molly was hot, eccentric, she drove men crazy in those days.

'All right then. Why not. But we'll have to get back soon I think. What time does he get off work?'

'About now but he always goes to a bar. He never gets back until around midnight.' 'Let's get one more drink here then,' said Molly. 'Then we'll go back and set up the tent.'

'Jesus.' I said.

I took their cash and went to the front for another round. I stood there waiting when I saw Zane out of the corner of my eye. I stood stock still but I knew I'd been spotted. He walked up to me, stared at the side of my head until he was satisfied, and then went toward the bathrooms. Matt and Molly were creeping toward me as he disappeared down the hall.

'Did he see you?'

'Of course he fucking saw me.'

'Damn.'

A few days later I found a job at Old Town Pizza. A day after that Molly found a job at the Long Island Pizzeria. We were set for food. Zane was a busboy at an uptown restaurant, out of all of us he made the best money. He came home nearly every night with two half cases of beer, one a fancy brand, and one a drinking brand.

The apartment was five rooms and L shaped. The kitchen at one end, then Zane's room, then the living room at the corner, then me and Molly's room, then Matt's room. This was where I'd lived a year ago, but in Matt's room, at the end of the L. This was a place I hadn't missed too much. Molly and I had walked the town together in search of work. We looked at the people who seemed to squirm as they shuffled forward, though some of them seemed to march.

'This town is full of fear.' I said.

'I agree,' she said.

One night, after the beer was gone and the boys slept in their perspective parts of the L, we talked about the town some more.

'...What are these people so afraid of?'

She was from a rural community in Illinois and she really wanted to know.

'I don't know. Portland is a bit lost. It's like the invisible city. It's desperate for its own culture like, say, San Fran or Seattle: you say these names and a world comes to mind. You say Portland and what do you get. Nothing. You get a high concentration of art colleges in a city with no recognizable culture.'

'What's – that – what.... to do with it.'

One of her giggling fits. She also had the hiccups.

‘Too many bitter hypersensitive kids under the illusion they can change the world with their wit, too many in a state of exalted impotence. This is the last green frontier man, the final outpost of the occident. Where do you go when there’s no where else to go? You go inward. And if you’re new at going inward you fuck it up. The entire Pacific Northwest is full of people who are fucked from the inside out,’

I was full of myself and ready to go on, but she was kissing my neck.

The next few weeks went by without much deviation. Everyone worked full time. It was inevitably the four of us sitting around the same living room talking about what happened to us that day, or later talking about what happened to us five, ten years ago, or before time began.

One night the painkillers went around. Matt had got them off a lawn mower. I’d taken more than my share and sat in a numb daze, a part of the background. Everyone was in a great state of babble when I went to the bathroom. I sat on the bowl and let it all slip out and I wondered. This shit coming out of me is the sum of all I’ve ingested. I wiped and pulled up my pants but I didn’t flush it away. I looked at it – two perfect logs of soft shit. Their very shape formed by what I eat to stay alive.

‘Matt! MATT!’ I yelled to the other room. He opened the door thinking I was having trouble.

‘What’s up, Knave?’

‘Matt. Check this out.’ I reached into the bowl and grabbed the healthiest, largest piece of shit and squeezed it in my fist.

‘Oh my god, what the fuck are you doing.’

‘I don’t know but look at it.’

‘That’s amazing.’

‘I know.’

But all of this was done during the extension of the dream. I woke up the next morning with dirty fingernails and wondered why.

<>

The summer was at its height and I could feel it.... humming. I walked around the apartment in a state of sweltering vibration. I was prone to periods of quiet panic. To look out the window was confusion. And these symptoms gained certain permanence. I resigned my head to a lonely state because it

could hardly explain itself. I stayed up later than everyone else. I sat on the couch in the living room and talked to myself.

‘This isn’t for you, this isn’t for you. What is for you then? I don’t know. I thought I knew, I thought I knew.’ It occurred to me that I often rhymed when I talked to myself. I stood up and snuck into our bedroom. She was dead asleep on her side facing the wall. I brought the covers up and pushed myself against her.

‘I’d love to wake up one morning with you inside me.’

But that was a different girl. Molly began to cry. She began to cry hysterically and fitfully and her sadness and confusion were so pure, so unconcerned with me that I thought she must still be dreaming. I pulled myself out and said I’m sorry... shhhh, I’m sorry... shhhh. I’m so sorry. I held her as she cried herself back to wherever she came from. She never turned around. The next morning I remembered what she told me about her brother. I never told her I remembered. We never talked about that night. Not specifically.

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Daren and Nadia were on off junkies. It took them awhile to figure out I was in town. When the word reached them, on a Saturday, they came over that night. It’s funny when I think about it. Six months ago I’d run off with some girl they barely knew. And here I was with another one. Both Daren and Nadia had made criticising my girlfriends one of they’re favourite past-times, Nadia on the pretence of being helpful and more experienced, Daren on the pretence of nothing much. When this was all over Molly wouldn’t fare too well. Molly was a small town girl, an ex cheerleader. Against the girl I’d left with, Wombat, they could never find much to say. They had difficulty understanding what she said. And mostly, they were afraid of her.

‘Well, Knave, are you glad to be back?’ Daren said.

‘I guess so.’

‘What do you mean you *guess so*? We’re the only friends you have in this world.’ Daren fished crumbles out of a large bag of marijuana and stuffed them into a glass pipe.

‘You know what Knave? You’re a pompous little bastard.’

And the whole room laughed. Everyone always laughed at what Daren said. Two hours later he had everyone terribly stoned. I’d been watching Matt for a while. He was getting wild eyes. Something in the way of cosmic

boredom was flittering inside. I wasn't surprised when I saw him jump from his seat. He had the standing lamp in his hand. Everyone was babbling on, paying him no attention, when he cracked the post over his knee. The noise made everyone look up. When he took the butt end and jammed it into the wall above Daren's head, everyone was suddenly standing. Daren shook the plaster out of his hair. It had made a wonderful noise. Zane suspected it had pierced clear through into the bathroom and went to check. He shook the pole from the other side and the lamp base meandered in its hole. It was too much. Matt took the rest of the pole and made a gouge at the same wall. Everyone was on the verge of dance. He made a second great lunge and it went through. Zane gave a delightful squeal. Everyone filed into the bathroom to see the damage but Zane wasn't there. Two black metal poles dangled like antennae above the little porcelain sink. The five of us were cramped in there, admiring the destruction, when Zane appeared in the doorway. Look what I got he said. He had a heavy sack full of red cherries.

We were evicted the next morning. Much more had gone on that night. The cherries were spattered all over the same wall, part of our nightlong attempt at an original and finally rather violent looking mural. A mutilated plastic doll smiled and twirled gently, attached to one of the poles by a piece of string. Daren had thrown an electric fan out the window and I followed with a glass light fixture that had bothered me for the last few weeks. It was funny – I heard the glass spatter four stories down, and leaning on the windowsill, listening to the echo, I saw a passer by, a young man, smile, like he knew we were having fun. Then there was a knock on the door, and everyone's eyes met in dead silence. We scurried to put the lights out. Molly, Matt, and I hurried into Matt's part of the L and the rest snuck into the kitchen. When nothing happened after five minutes I stood up and said,

'We need to get out of here – now.'

But no one seemed to be in such a hurry. I found my keys, laced my shoes and went to the kitchen.

'Zane, what are you doing? Don't you know what's going on? We need to leave.'

Zane was leaned up against the stove eating sunflower seeds.

'I'm not leaving.' he said.

I shoved two bottles of beer in my pockets and knocked on the bathroom door.

'Molly, what are you doing.'

'I'm taking a pee.'

'We need to leave.'

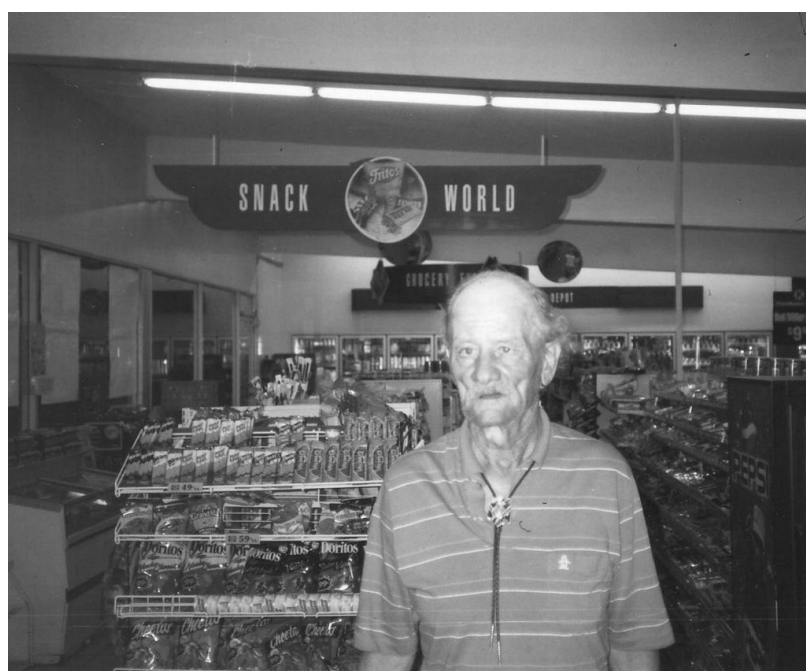
'Why?'

I took the stairs. Creeping and quiet I went out the side door and saw two empty police cruisers parked on the curb. The radios were sputtering. I walked toward the Plaid Pantry and thought about hanging around the phone booth, maybe calling the home number to see what was going on. Instead I walked toward the Park Blocks. No one would bother me there. I found a stone bench behind some hedges and opened a bottle.

Here, for the first time in weeks, I felt clear, unperturbed, sane. The night was cool and the stars were alive. It took me a while to realize the sound of police sirens in the distance was almost constant. When one faded out another took its place. A young couple scrolled across the path in front of me. He tried, gently, to put his arm around her shoulder. She squirmed away in disgust. I drank my beer and wondered how everyone was doing back at the apartment.

For in a community of strangers, we need a quick, easy-to-use set of stereotypes, cartoon outlines, with which to classify the people we encounter. In a village, most of the people you deal with have been known to you (or to someone in your family circle) for a long time; they have matured subtly and slowly as characters, and are painted in varying shades of grey. You will probably have seen them in more than one role: the milkman or the postman is not just the man who delivers milk or mail, he is known too for a variety of off-duty interests and occupations. He is, you happen to know, a keen gardener, his marriage is reputed to be rocky; he is just out of hospital after an operation. My city milkman, though, happens fully fledged: a uniform hat, a smudge of moustache, a rounding belly . . . I have no more to go on. Most of the time I need no more:

**the city is a great deadener of curiosity.**



# CONTRIBUTORS



**TOM BLOOD** was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa in 1973. He's hard to track. Which, as he's the world's greatest surrealist poet, would make sense. His book, **The Sky Position**, is available through Marriage Records.

[www.marriagerecs.com](http://www.marriagerecs.com)

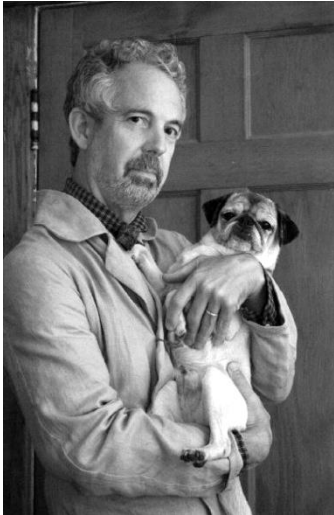


**LEATICIA HUSSAIN** was born in 1976. She lives in Hudson, New York. She did the painting on the back cover. I kissed her once in 1998. It was nice.

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The quote on page 31 was taken from Jonathan Raban's *Soft City* ©1974

**La Reata #4 (Autumn 2005)  
Ed. Ariel Beller**

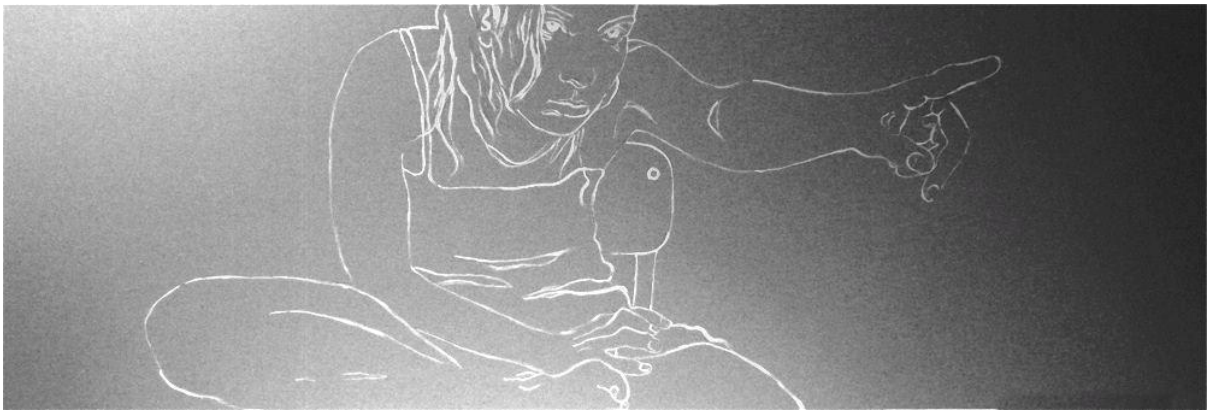


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La Reata is an unusual little magazine. It has a highly individual slant, the poets it features all seem to be very close to each other poetically. They are all little masters of off the wall charm and write what might be called aslant poetry. I like them all, especially Tom Blood. The others are Dave Brinks, editor Ariel Beller (whose work shone out for me in a recent issue of Tears in the Fence) Ellen Marsh, Davide Trame, Matt Gale and Feizal Valli. The poems are interspersed with artworks which add to the overall feel of dangerous sensitivity. This magazine started out as flawed but promising and it has got better and better. I can't help wondering why I love the poetry of this band of unknowns (a mix of Brits and Americans) so much while the work of so many respectable pedigrees bores the life out of me. There are tiny twists of language and manipulated image in these poems which remind me what original poetry is really about. Look out for the next issue; I think the editor is planning to upgrade the presentation - the material deserves it. Highly recommended.

**Tim Allen, Terrible Work Press**



**DON'T THINK WITH WORDS**