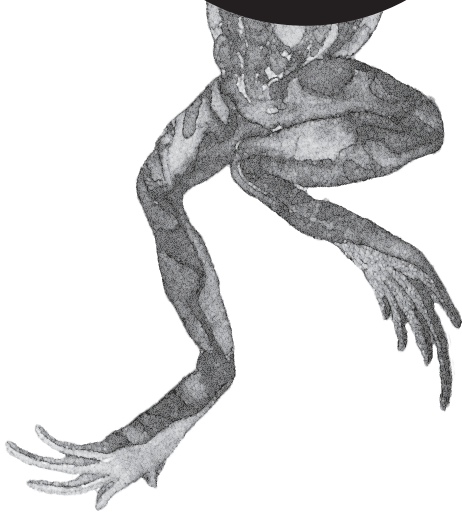




*The  
Queen's  
Head*



*A 'literary' zine  
#1*



# EDITO EDICIAL ORIAL

→ Once upon a time, a girl's words ran to rubies. The words of her lazy sister, meanwhile turned to toads right inside her mouth, the sheer horror of which drove her to cut out her tongue. The end.

It's a very short story, but also quite an apt prelude to this, the debut issue of The Queen's Head. Many thanks to all who contributed with words, pics and encouragement; you've been busy sisters.

Still, that's fairytales for you, amphibians everywhere, cane toads of the mind. Down wells, up trousers, rings inside frogs inside bigger frogs still. And so say you're an ill queen, you send your youngest to fetch a pail of healing water, there's a talking frog sat in the well. *Of course* he's royalty slumming among lilies. No surprises there.

What's notable about the frog prince in 'The Queen Who Sought A Drink from A Certain Well', as collected in *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, is his expectation of amplexus despite being no easy lay. The elder sisters outright barf at the suggestion of a snog while the youngest, deliberating over beheading a frog or frenching the poor brute... well, who's for cuisses de grenouille? Yet out spills not viscera, but a viceroy. Lucky, that.

If there's anything to take from these odd fairytales, when conjuring something grand from something squat perseverance, at the risk of severance, pays. That's not to say the first Queen's Head is a pre-kissed prince, but take it with you all the same: a frog promising a kingdom, or handful of rubied words.

thequeenszine@gmail.com  
facebook.com/thequeenszine

*This is a reprint of the original Queen's Head #1, which was a miracle of cardboard, string and clandestine photocopies - or, perhaps, a handsome prince trapped in the body of a frog.*



R. A. Davis

# THE PARTING GLASS

*Joanna Newsom and the  
Break-Up Album*

→ Joanna Newsom would deny that her latest work is a break-up record, preferring to direct listeners towards broader themes: she assigns to each of her records, not a famous ex-boyfriend, but an element. *Ys* was water, named after a deluge myth, having ending a relationship with a man called Noah. *Have One On Me*, meanwhile, is earth. More specifically, she invokes the soil of home, which in Newsom's case is Nevada County, California: gold rush territory. From under this title, this blessing, a story of retreat unfurls. Before the flood; after the gold rush: "I found a little plot of land / in the Garden of Eden."

In the song "81" Newsom, born in '82, appears to be taking us back to the moment of her conception, but it's a trick. In the printed lyrics, '81 is revealed to be a pun on 1 Anno Domini, AD 1, Christ's infancy, the innocence of man. Joanna Newsom might not believe in Christ, or men, but she believes in innocence. "Tell me," she demands, perhaps pondering the Pelagian heresy, "what is meant by sin, or none, in a garden seceded from the union in the year of A.D. 1?" What is there to be sorry for when Eden secedes from earth and becomes heaven again? When love withdraws from reality and becomes once again the idea of love? Before asking the question she bids farewell, to "loves that I have known" and

an acknowledgement, “even muddiest waters run.” This is the first lesson: life, however tainted, goes on.

Newsom is no Utopian. Her California is a garden of “untidy furrows” where foxes gobble up the goldfish “from their sorry, golden state.” She’s a true patriot, a stomping sceptic who in ‘Good Intentions Paving Company’ feels the “tilt of this strange nation, waving the flag, feeling it drag.” But love for Kerouac’s whiplash of road is forsaken for the love of stasis and oblivion: “when I only want for you to pull over and hold me, till I can’t remember my own name.” The road ought to be the tension between innocence and experience, but the rope goes slack when she falls in love “as easy as falling asleep.”

Certain phrases diagram this album. The first song begins, “Easy, easy. My man and me” but by the final song she realises “how easy I was not.” The couple take refuge in the simplicity of their bed, but at the end:

*It does not suffice,  
to merely lie beside each other,  
as those who love each other  
do.*

Have One On Me assumes its emotional coda in song number eighteen, ‘Does Not Suffice (In California refrain)’. It takes its tune from the ninth song, dividing the three-disc trilogy into two equal

halves, one hour each way, while on the middle disc each song refers to day then night, from which she emerges renewed. Lurking between the tiredness of ‘Jackrabbits’ and the setting sun of ‘Occident’ is the album’s angriest turn; ‘Go Long’ sounds out the plain disgust of a deserted lover. The singer dreams herself as the princess brought on pain of dismemberment to a grotesque palace to love and cure a troubled prince, who has worked his way through a kingdom of princesses and is still unhappy. Upon waking, she sees that this prince, for all his sweet talk, is nothing more than a tortured artist demanding her sacrifice:

*With the loneliness of you  
mighty men,  
with your jaws, and fists, and  
guitars,  
and pens, and your sugarlip*

A cascade of spider notes washes the man out of her hair: “Go Long! Go Long! Right over the edge of the earth!” she prompts. She swings from rage, to concern, to pity, but finally to insult:

*You are caked in mud,  
and in blood and worse.  
Chew your bitter cud.  
Grope your little nurse.*

You can see her hurling this song word for word, along with his belongings, from an upstairs



window. With the last barbed parting shot she could almost be wishing him well:

*May he master everything  
that such men may know  
about loving, and then letting  
go.*

She curses him even with her blessing. If there is anything to be learned at the end of a relationship it is that love is the art of letting go, the skill of leaving behind guilt and reclaiming innocence. Just don't get too good at it. In the crossfire of 'Go Long', the most potent ammunition is in the following sentiments:

*Do you think you can just stop,  
when you're ready for a  
change?  
Who will take care of you  
when you're old and dying?*

Certain lovers are guilty of utopianism; the consequence of continuously moving on, of perfecting love, is that you might lose yourself searching, end your days the lonely drunk at the bar with only the memory of a girl who once said, have one on me. And while you might fear this fate above all others, even death, consolation is not enough. *Have One On Me* might conceal another meaning:

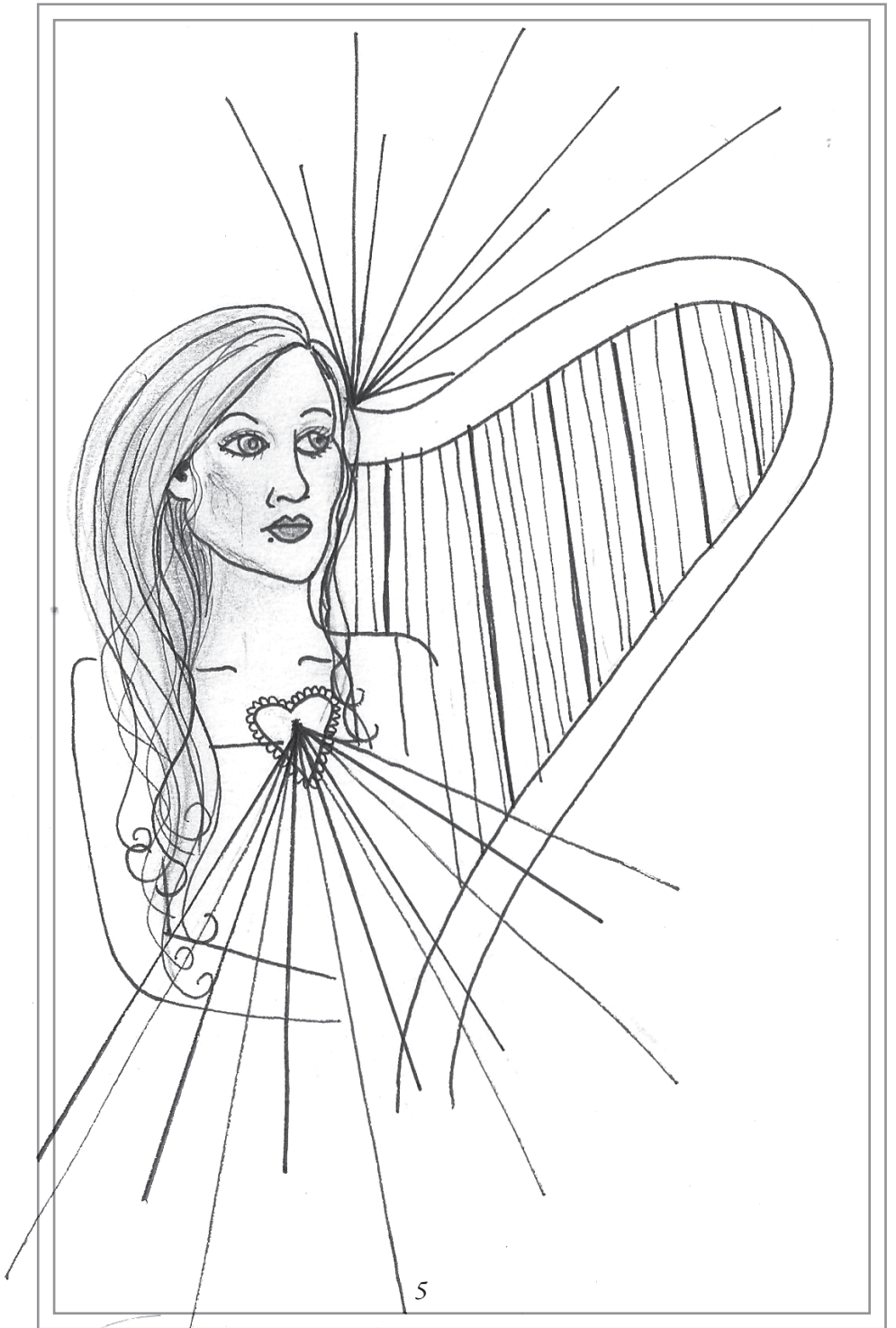
*Who is going to bear  
your beautiful children?*

She means: if not me. Who is going to bear our beautiful children? Even if you do manage to move on, you can never have these children. Those who might have come so very close to being will never be. And because every question in these songs is deflected back on the writer, she must answer them herself, she must name and mourn the inconceivable child:

*This is the song for Baby Birch.  
I will never know you.  
And at the back of what we've  
done,  
There is that knowledge of you.*

Baby Birch is a lucid dream, an alternate reality, haunted by the ghost of a daughter. It is not so unusual. What couple hasn't hazarded a baby name or two, tested them against surnames? Do you dare to name the idea of a person who, though built from someone you might never love again, you would have loved unconditionally? At the heart of Ys, in the song 'Sawdust and Diamonds' was the pledge: "And they will recognise all of the lines of your face in the face of the daughter of the daughter of my daughter." What a promise, what a disappointment. Now, in 'On A Good Day' she confesses: "I had begun to fill in all the lines, right down to what we'd name her." She wants to be a mother and perhaps for a moment she





thought she was:

*There is a blacksmith,  
and there is a shepherd,  
and there is a butcher boy,  
and there is a barber, who's  
cutting  
and cutting away at my only  
joy.*

She lists those friendly craftsmen of nursery rhyme whose labour it often is to cut, to shear, to sever. Her picture of the child, "Your eyes are green. Your hair is gold. Your hair is black. Your eyes are blue" is shifting and diminishing. So the idea of her is finally, grudgingly, aborted: "Be at peace, baby, and be gone."

The sacrifice (that is, the making holy) of Baby Birch is a consequence of the end of love. Newsom has stated (to quote from a recent MOJO interview): "I know we can't dictate what happen in our lives, but I've always felt the real creative work of my life will be to be a mom." And what a mother she will be, what a song she would have to write in honour of her 'real' offspring in order to match the song for Baby Birch. Or perhaps there is no need of a ballad for a real child, when giving life is dedication enough.

The last sung notes of this album are not words at all, but la la la's. 'Does Not Suffice' begins "I will pack all my pretty dresses..." Over three verses, she carefully

extricates herself from his life, signified by the contents of her wardrobe. Imagine a woman with so many "pretty dresses," so many "high-heeled shoes," that's quite a removal. She knows what all the extra wardrobe space makes room for; he'll wear the guilt. He will always find traces of her, a dropped button, a hairpin. She's done her best to extract it all, but it's as though she's only just left and might be back for that button, that pin, as though the last slam of the door is still echoing around that empty space:

*The tap of hangers,  
swaying in the closet--  
unburdened hooks  
and empty drawers--  
and everywhere I tried to love  
you  
is yours again,  
and only yours.*

Yours. Joanna. It ends like a letter, but she is not his anymore.



He has exiled her, so he keeps his place, his alone. Anyone can come and go in his bed, but she pictures him alone, his room as uncluttered as he is unloved:

*I picture you, rising up in the morning:  
stretching out on your  
boundless bed,  
beating a clear path to the shower,  
scouring yourself red.*

The only freedom he has achieved is the freedom to abrade himself routinely. So she goes on to sing her lazy refrain, because she has said all she has to say.

These sad songs are intended to resonate in other hearts, a generous substitution like buying everyone a drink. You don't need to know what it cost; I just want to put this taste in your mouth. Where is Newsom this morning, washing herself gently? Has she found an answer there to what is meant by sin, or none? Perhaps she has already forgiven herself in advance, for failing to find an answer:

Meet me in the garden of Eden.  
Bring a friend.

A note on the title: *Disc three, track three of Have One On Me ('Autumn')* contains a lyric referring to the song 'Star of the Country Down', an Irish traditional popular in the USA but more accurately titled 'Star of the County Down'. It was one of five versions or descendents of a pentatonic melody attached to the title 'Kingsfold' or 'Dives and Lazarus', brought together by Ralph Vaughan Williams in Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus for harp and orchestra. The same tune is distinguishable (at least to the author's ear) in the traditional Irish song of farewell, 'The Parting Glass', allegedly the most popular song in the English speaking world, until superseded by Burns' 'Auld Lang Syne'.

*Stephen O'Toole*

# *For Shiona*

## **1. Something Old**

The bristlecone pine tree cuts himself shaving. He is standing fully clothed at the sink with top shirt button undone. The right arm and shoulder of his suit jacket is dangling down his back to the to the floor, like something saved from a house fire. The bristlecone pine tree feels an ache at his jaw. The ache at his jaw feels a lot like the thought that he is going to be late. He catches the thought in some tissue paper. The thought is the size and colour of some small jewel. He smiles and thinks that an honest excuse can be a gift too if it is said when two people are together and in love.

## **2. Something New**

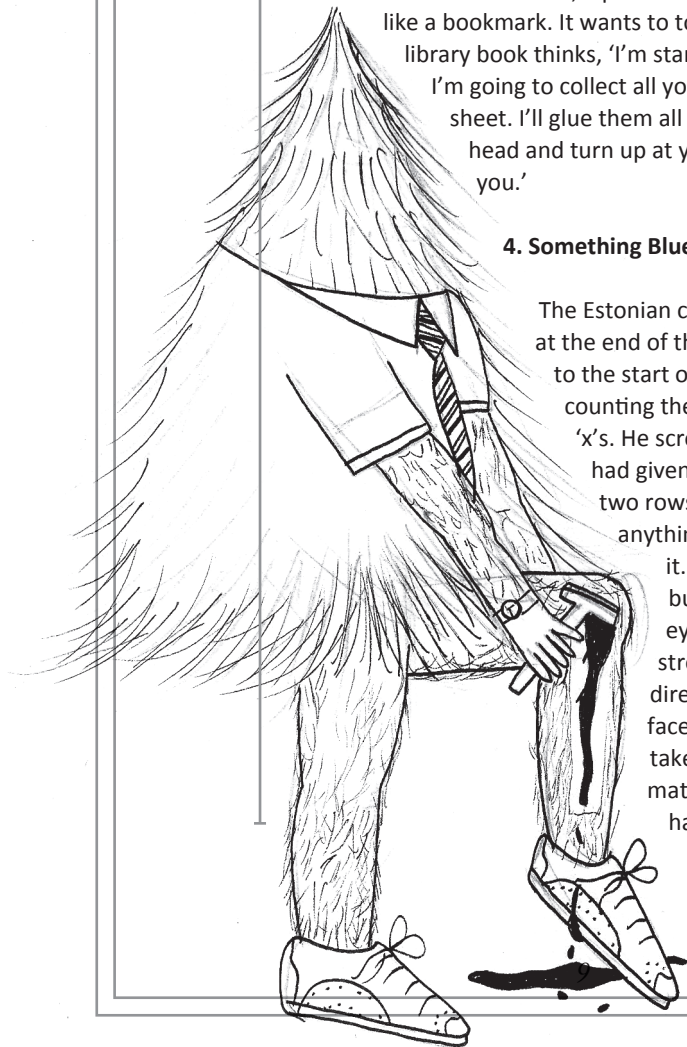
The cyborg is sad. The light on his left hand chest plate is lit up. The 'sad' light. It is the year in the future in which cyborgs have happened. The cyborg is like an answering machine with an organ or two; some brain bits. They have gone too far in one direction with him, scientifically speaking. Everyone has agreed. He has a little box in his throat that crackles. He asks if he can sound like her instead. He has a little photograph in his hand. What does she sound like?, says the man. That's why I asked you, says the cyborg. That's what I want to know.

### 3. Something Borrowed

The library book is reading itself. It is 'The Observer's Book of Birds'. In the middle, a piece of paper, a bus ticket, carrying on like a bookmark. It wants to touch its feet with its head. The library book thinks, 'I'm staring at an old bus ticket you left. I'm going to collect all your old bus tickets and make a sheet. I'll glue them all together and put them over my head and turn up at your house at night and haunt you.'

### 4. Something Blue

The Estonian cornflower adds an extra 'X' at the end of the email. He moves his cursor to the start of the row and moves it along, counting them. He has given her eleven 'x's. He scrolls up to her last email. She had given him one; in her first email, two rows of nine. This doesn't mean anything, he thinks, and doesn't mean it. He feels calmly, unhysterically, but crushingly alone. He shuts his eyes and imagines his mattress stretching for miles in every direction. He rolls over onto his face. He wonders how long it would take to roll to London. He is glad his mattress is memory foam; sad that it has no mouth.



*Ian Kenneth Macbeth*

# LET'S HOWL, SAID THE DOG

*On José Saramago &  
civilisation's final trumpet*

→ What we need is an  
insurrection of liberated  
consciences. But is such a thing  
still possible?

José Saramago, *The Notebook*

But for the gravely unwelcome intervention of his death in June, Portuguese Nobel Laureate José Saramago would have addressed this year's Edinburgh International Book Festival on the subject of his political views. A lifelong communist and member of the Portuguese Communist Party, Saramago was known on the Iberian peninsula and in South America for his controversial contributions to public discourse, but his Anglophone readers have had to wait until the publication this year of *The Notebook* to read some of the political writings of a man *L'Osservatore Romano* saw fit to denounce as a "populist extremist" on the day of his funeral.

*The Notebook* consists of the near-daily blog entries Saramago made from September 2008 to August 2009 during a break between writing novels, but really that somewhat stunted and ugly word 'blog' scarcely does it justice. Readers will find an exile's beautiful, lyrical love-letters to his homeland, from which Saramago went into self-imposed exile following the outcry over his highly irreverent 1991 novel *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ*; fascinating

fragments of travelogue; witty, aphoristic philosophical musings; proud updates on the activities and achievements of his José Saramago Foundation; insights into his long life and rich body of work; and generous tributes to friends, contemporaries and influences. The pieces about Kafka and Marquez are particularly rewarding, as is Saramago's construction of his own "literary family tree."

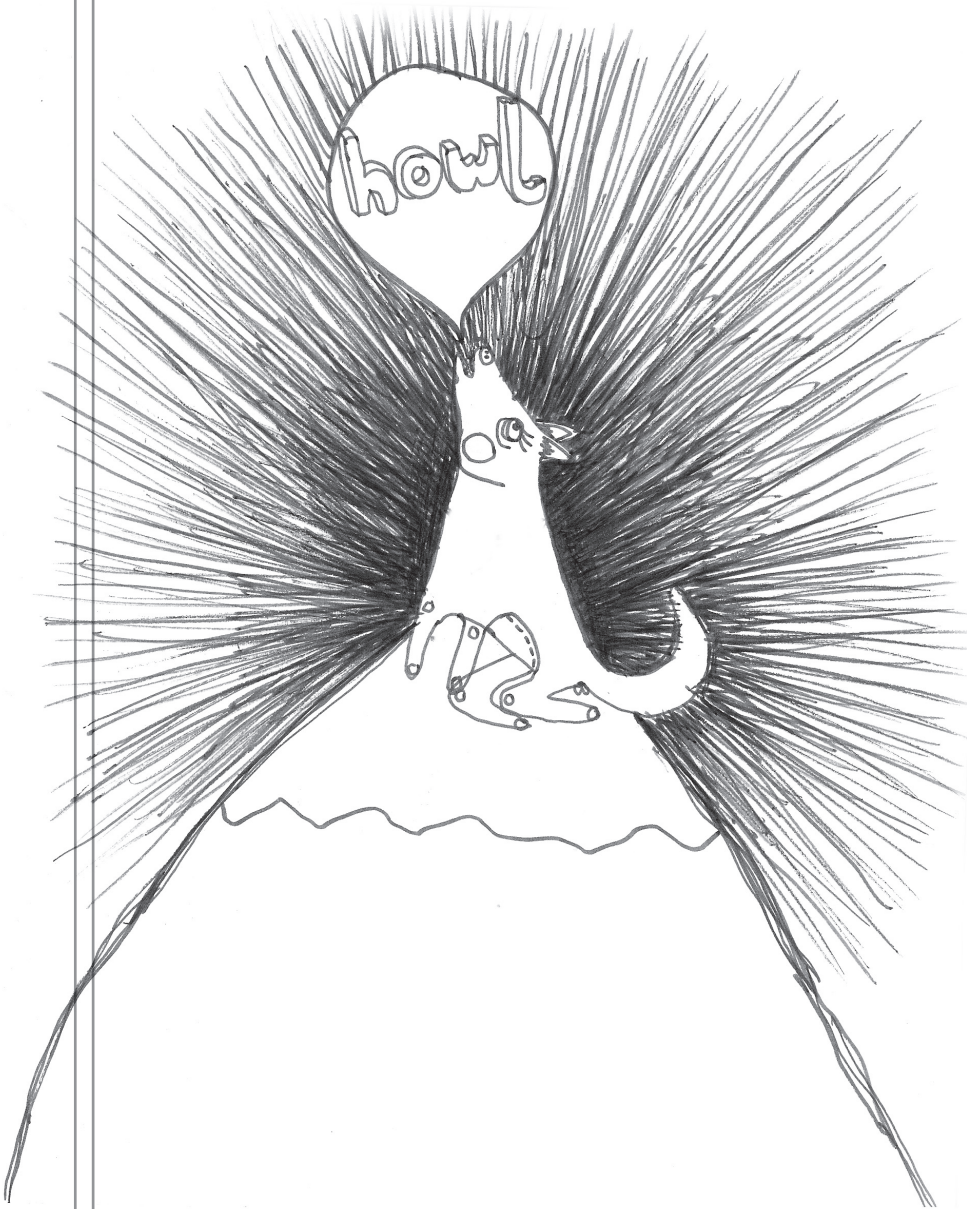
But most striking and most frequent are his impassioned, eloquent damnations of the abuses of power by those who wield it, and the willful moral and mental blindness of the politically somnambulant populations on whose behalf such power is wielded. Though, as he notes in the entry from July 7, Saramago never "placed literature at the service of [his] ideology," these themes will be familiar to the more attentive readers of his novels.

His most famous work, and the one which secured him the Nobel Prize, *Blindness* is perhaps the most powerful and disturbing allegorical study yet to appear in fiction of the "putrefying corpse" of democracy. As Saramago's wife Pilar is quoted as saying in *The Notebook*, it "anticipated the effects of the [economic] crisis we are suffering today. Those people desperately running down Wall Street... before the money runs out are no different from the ones

who move blind, directionless through the novel." Saramago remarks that "this Andalusian woman may be right," but in truth she is only partly so: the power of *Blindness* derives not just from its terrifying use of a primal fear, of losing one's sight, of utter helplessness, as a metaphorical device, but from the plasticity of the metaphor.

The recent, obscene scramble to shore up a morally and intellectually as well as actually bankrupt economic system is but one example of the "mental blindness" Saramago returns to again and again in *The Notebook*, and not even the most terrifying. Think of the coming ecological catastrophe: scientists have warned us for 20 years, in increasingly apocalyptic terms and with increasingly unanswerable evidence, that the current socio-economic order is completely, cataclysmically unsustainable. And what of the horrors of the ongoing, unending holocaust of poverty and immiseration which is the lot of most of the world's population? Fortunately, we have devised an insatiable, ADHD-afflicted 24-hour news media to ensure that such distressing fare swiftly makes way for the next trending topic on the news agenda, a celebrity incarceration perhaps, or some bit of low-level political chicanery. As Saramago puts it:





*What is already clear is that we have lost our critical capacity to analyse what is happening... We have jettisoned our responsibility for thought and action. We have turned ourselves into inert beings incapable of the sense of outrage, the refusal to conform, the capacity to protest... We are reaching the end of civilisation and I don't welcome its final trumpet.*

This is what makes *Blindness* so terrifying – not because it is, as it so often seems, a vision of Hell, but because it is a vision of the world in which we live but choose not to see.

How we arrived at this impasse, and how we might escape it, is, in part, the subject of *Blindness'* sequel, *Seeing*, an even more explicit examination of the chasm that has opened between disillusioned electorates and the supposedly post-ideological (actually dogmatically right-wing), technocratic political classes in Western democracies. The message of this parable about a city that utterly derails the smooth running of democracy merely by casting mostly blank ballots in a national election is an impassioned plea to the disenfranchised masses everywhere to realise the dormant power that is theirs. The politicians in *Seeing*, confused and distressed by this seeming

rejection by the voters, start to associate this “plague of blankness” with the “plague of blindness” which afflicted the same city four years previously, but this confused conclusion only confirms their complete misunderstanding of the events which are overtaking them. As the title suggests, and as one of the book’s more astute politicians openly states, the voters’ abandonment of the hollow theatre of constitutional politics is an outbreak of clear-sightedness. Seeing’s “blank revolution” would appear to be a perfect model of Slavoj Žižek’s doctrine of passive resistance, that doing nothing is a more revolutionary act than any activity – from voting to public demonstrations – which “supports the functioning of the power apparatus, or helps it to reproduce itself”. But Saramago, like Žižek, knows that such passive resistance is insufficient. He understands that those currently in power will countenance any crime in the discipline of the unruly rabble, down to mass murder, and indeed this is the fate that befalls Seeing’s “blank revolution”.

*Seeing* can perhaps best be understood as a critique of the faddish idea of “interstitial resistance” as advanced by Alain Badiou among others and popularised in a recent book by Simon Critchley. This idea – that, given the insurmountable power of the late capitalist state, the



only place for radical action is in the gaps or interstices of civil society – is not a new one. The commune movement of the 1960s and '70s was grounded in a similar philosophy and it has distinct echoes of ancient Eastern belief systems, but in its new form it provides intellectual cover for withdrawal from politics and accommodation with the very system radicals ought to be challenging and eventually overthrowing.

It is perhaps the fundamental paradox of liberation that the functions and powers of the state must be seized and strengthened in order to establish the conditions under which the state can cease to exist. Recall Lenin's famous maxim: "When freedom exists, there will be no state." Like all communists, Saramago longs for the day when parliamentary politics, along with every other facet of the Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie, is swept away, superseded and rendered needless by a new society founded on the principles of justice, fraternity and solidarity. The "fraternal paradise" which blossoms in *Seeing* following the withdrawal of the apparatuses of state can be read as Saramago's vision of just such a post-political, co-operative, communitarian future. Crucially, however, Saramago knows that this kind of benign, Batlebyan resistance, advocated by Critchley et al,

will never be sufficient to build this New Jerusalem. At a time when capitalism has exposed its inherent and irresolvable contradictions to scrutiny as never before, and when academics and working people (we ought not expect too much from our political class) are studying alternatives to the current system in greater numbers and with greater seriousness than at any time since the end of the Cold War, Saramago's message has never been more important.

In his review of *Seeing* in the *New Statesman*, Prof. John Gray argued: "the book is haunted by the thought that the world's most serious problems have no political solution." This is a profound misreading. Though *Seeing* may be a pessimistic, even bleak book, it should be read as an alarm call: if this is the havoc we could wreak merely by withdrawing our participation in democracy's rituals, Saramago is saying: *just imagine what we could achieve if we were truly to participate*. Not just within the narrow parameters of the "post-ideological" consensus, but with the vision of a transformed world as our compass. Is an insurrection of liberated consciences still possible? We should read that question not as a cry of despair but as a challenge to us all.

Let's howl, said the dog.





**RUN BY WOMEN FOR WOMEN**

**TYCI**

**A NEW COLLECTIVE EMBRACING EXPLORING AND  
CELEBRATING ALL THINGS FEMME.**

**READ NEWS VIEWS AND REVIEWS AT [TYCI.ORG.UK](http://TYCI.ORG.UK)  
OR EMAIL [CONTACT.TYCI@GMAIL.COM](mailto:CONTACT.TYCI@GMAIL.COM) FOR MORE INFORMATION.**

*Ryan Vance / Daniel Baker*

# ORI

## A narrative mixtape

→ *A musical three-in-one experiment; a mixtape, story, treasure hunt; built song by song, word by word; part tug-of-war, part co-op gameplay; Dan deals first.*

*Albert Ayler Quartet  
Love Cry, Truth Is Marching In  
John Coltrane's funeral, 1967*

Truly, harrowing. For all eternity. An apocalyptic evocation of syncretic spirituality. Sunny Murray's earths-core rumble gestures at the passage of time without becoming beholden to its infinity.

The brothers Ayler, poignantly dispatching uncharacteristically tender flourishes into their horns between monolithic blurts of tortured atavism. The nursery rhyme simplicity of the marching band fanfare, the unified sustaining of the most rapturous of notes culled directly from an earliest memory of the gospel church. Then someone, who cares who, starts to scream. Coltrane is dead. Music alone will not suffice. Playing is not enough. The quartet descends into pure sound.

*Teseque-Maryam Guebro*  
*'Mother's Love'*  
**Ethiopianes Vol.21 (Piano Solo)**

Levi returns slowly to life, feeling liquid, inside and out, each drop from the cave's roof blooming on his skin as a mineral meridian. Something is different this time. He is lying half in the sea and the water is somehow clear instead of red and frothy. There are neither lightbulbs nor thumbtacks in his mouth. He does not hurt. This is new.

Sitting up, he can see the sun rising behind the pleasure pier, which teeters on the horizon, distant and wrecked.

Kokou is nearby. Kokou is always nearby, afterwards.

"What did we do?" asks Levi.

Memories stick like shrapnel: he remembers the auditorium, wrapping red velvet round his big, steady hands and yanking 'til the curtains tore, 'til the rafters buckled, 'til the old gods came home. The pier's current likeness to a sunken elephant graveyard is their doing.

"Well I hope you," he says, "feel better."

But it is not about feeling better; it is not about that at all.

*Oval – 'Do While'*  
**Systemich**

Not, as would eventually become quite clear, the "new Eno." Rather, a studied yet somehow sensually organic reformatting of Music For Airports birthed into being by Markus Popp's healthily destructo mind-set. If machines could become confused, beset by fever amid the ever-increasing heat beneath the

keypad, they would perhaps emit the worried frazzles and wraith-like static captured on 'Do While.'

The background muzak trotted out by some contemporaneous producers of the post-rave milieu tended towards a retreat into the middle class sonic myopias of the chill out. Papp, however, is resolutely unconcerned with avoiding disruption; the riddled totemic skips and action-painted self-mods embedded upon the source material of these lucid dreamscapes imbue a tetchy anxiety. Amongst that, though, lies the beauty.

*Do Make Say Think*  
*'Ontario Plates'*

**Winter Hymn Country Hymn Secret Hymn**

"I think you're made up."

This is before the pier. There is ash in the soil and blood in the ash, and cindered leaves of a long overdue journal spiral towards the crescent moon.

"Not all Orisha, just you."

Kokou has exactly two online presences, a Wikipedia entry lifted almost verbatim from a Google Books sample of a mid-50s travel guide, written for the golden age of National Geographic tourism, before post-colonialism was a good thing. A dubious source. Yet, Levi's tent is a bubbling plastic pool and most of his skin is burnt and dripping.

Kokou, as it happens, might consider tonight's destruction somewhat excessive – if she understood excess or, for that matter, destruction. But she is learning. She is trying to remember why she threw Levi's portable gas canister into the campfire. Like the trees, now black and upright, now fiery deciduous, she is



missing limbs and limbs of herself.  
So this, she thinks, is how it feels.

*Codeine*  
*'Tom'*  
***The White Birch***

How could there ever be so much pain in the world? What, or who, are they mourning? It's the speed of it. The entropic dynamics are everything here. This is the practice of the anti-flourish.

The telecaster, the bass and the drum kit aspire towards the aching inevitability of the natural disaster. Nobody has quite given up in this world, but everyone is exhausted. Yet it's a faultlessly realised collective aesthetic, one sprinkled with glacial exhortations towards transgression and rich in its exploration of metaphysics. The trio render their heroic fatigue into woebegone rings, each chord afforded the time and space to disintegrate fully before being trampled by the next into the ether.

Despite the harrowing subject matter - part psycho-spite, part detached deconstructions of everyday emotional minutiae - Tom builds unexpectedly towards a cathartic bliss out of a chorus. Something has occurred to rob the narrator of the ability to console himself with nostalgia. There is now only a baleful submission to the terrifyingly adult premise that shame will most likely outlast shamelessness. It is one of the most moving rejections of the grand rock gesture in favour of the cosmic kitchen sink drama in recent memory.

*Grizzly Bear*  
*He Hit Me (And it felt like a kiss)*  
***Cover; originally by The Crystals***

Kokou is on holiday, is a tourist, has never been this far west.

The air tastes different and, even though each new tongue folds the wind in different ways, she is now certain the ambient tang of industry has nothing to do with Levi's mouth. It is everywhere. It sits on the skin like a film. As if to slough it off, she vigorously applies a cheese grater to Levi's soft stomach.

Who will witness this test of strength and fortitude? Levi was alone in his flat when the possession took hold, and Kokou is unused to this sort of solitude. She has such bile at her disposal in this body it seems perverse to keep it private, to remain within the constraint of this ill frame.

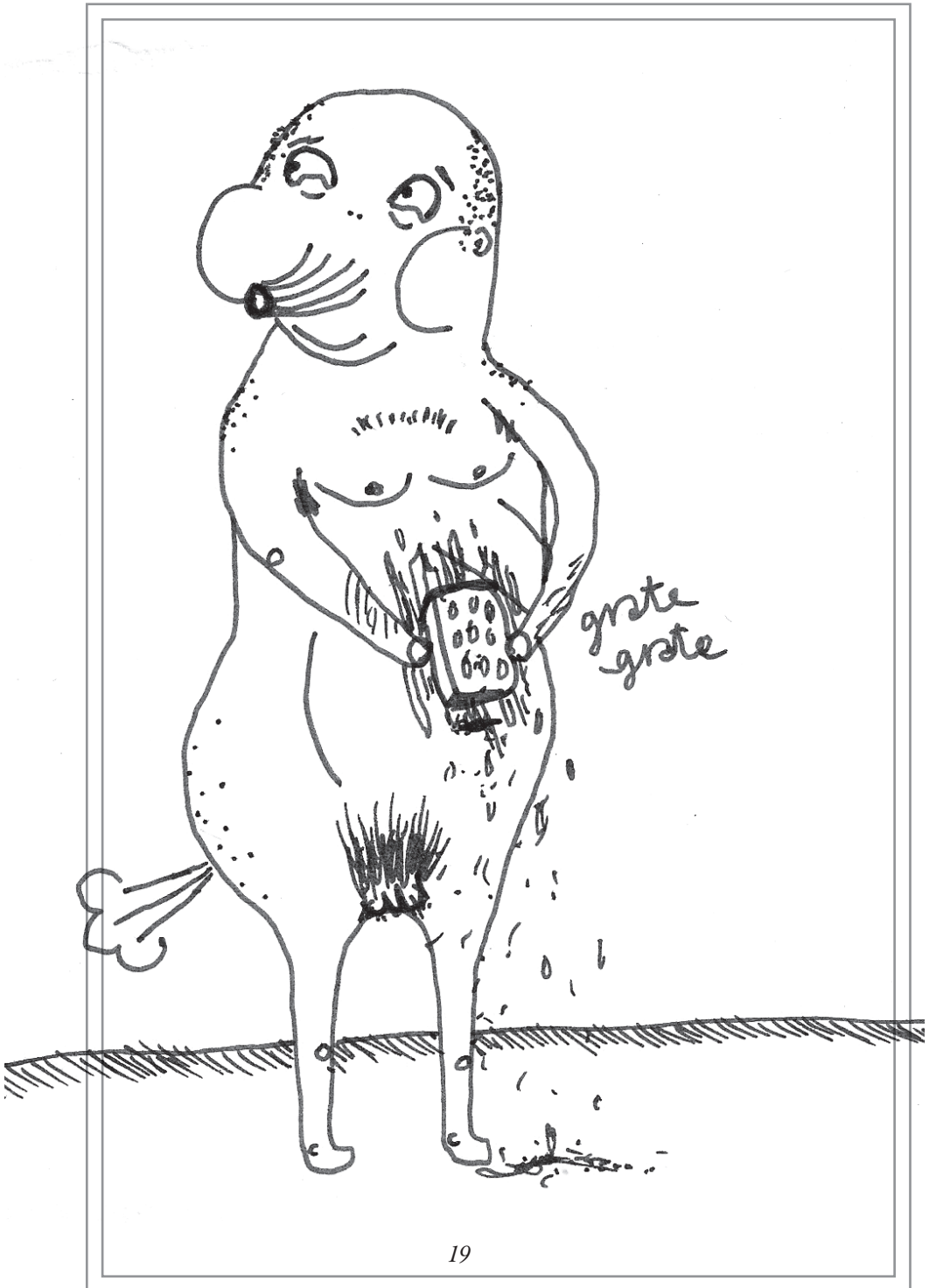
It will take the isolation of a camping trip for Kokou to snap out of a routine of eons. For now, however, she is content enough upending into Levi's eyes a full bottle of lemon juice found sitting with the condiments.

*Washington Philips*  
*'I Had a Good Father And Mother'*  
***What Are They Doing In Heaven Today?***

It's the humbling quiver of a soul so vulnerable you worry about its safety from the moment you hear it.

While the brittle timbre of the depression era acoustic guitar slung over the shoulders of roving Delta bluesmen oozed a suppressed physical violence when eventually recorded by the Lomaxs, Washington Phillips' as yet unidentified





homemade instrument bleeds with the transcendent sunlight of the heavens. In the words of Frank Walker, the man who first captured the iconoclastic primitivism of this most ethereal of gospel musicians, “there wasn’t nobody on this earth could use that thing except for him.”

Phonoharp, Dolceola, whatever. Those in search of an absolute miss the point entirely. When John Fahey set about re-formatting Charley Patton’s visceral twang into a composite of the Old Weird America and the contemporary avant garde, the elemental decay of the 45’s he so religiously collected was considered as vital as the music contained amid their grooves. The crackle and hiss that shroud Philips’ sixteen fully recorded tracks would be resolutely unremarkable, were it not for the truly otherworldly paeans to his god he penned and interpreted.

Like a child scolded at church for fidgeting, he retreats into himself and conjures up the ethereal yet controlled wail of the repentant sinner.

As meditative as these pieces are, though, it’s difficult to interpret Philips relationship with God as anything other than difficult. “I used to have a real good mother and a father, and they certainly stood the test,” he intones, extolling the virtues of their piety at every other juncture. He’s as terrified about their fate as he surely is about his own. All he can do is pray.

*Katie Dill*  
*‘This Body’s Only Rental’*  
**Full of Gentle**

Levi’s hands tremble as he wipes the leather hardback with a soft damp cloth.

The Special Collection has many nicknames. Middle management joke about The Dungeon, the other cleaners consider it Overtime, and one particularly fanatical archivist called it Nirvana, but Levi has his own secret sobriquet: The Sarcophagus. Partly it’s the décor, gilded but sterile, and partly it’s the podiums under spotlights, just like a museum, but it’s the reverence which affects him most; the patience and the glory of these fine, old books. Between thumb and forefinger he could rub their spines to dust.

His hands would shake regardless: at home, during church, in line at the supermarket. People think there’s something wrong with him, as if because he’s big he should be dead to the sway of the world. But I feel it more, he says, because there’s more of me to feel it. And then they say, feel what?

Levi would like that. To just, for a little while, not feel at all.

The journal he’s holding trembles open to a page on warrior gods, as if summoned.

*Screamin Jay Hawkins*  
*‘Little Demon’*  
**B-Side to 1956 single, ‘I Put A Spell On You’**

This is before most.

The sweat of life slicking off each popped hip, each arm flung, Olorun kicks, hollers, calls for holy witness. The universe doesn’t so much explode into being as it does congeal very quickly. Everything, everything is perfect, just as it should be. Everything, except-

And there she is, at the end of everything.



# CONTENTS

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
The Parting Glass  
*R. A. Davis*

8. \_\_\_\_\_  
For Shiona  
*Stephen O'Toole*

10. \_\_\_\_\_  
Let's Howl, Said the Dog  
*Ian Kenneth Macbeth*

16. \_\_\_\_\_  
Ori  
*Ryan Vance / Daniel Baker*

## *Illustrations*

7. \_\_\_\_\_  
Joanna Newsom  
*Aimee Williamson*

11. \_\_\_\_\_  
The Shaving Tree  
*Aimee Williamson*

14 \_\_\_\_\_  
Howldog  
*Kate Montgomery*

21 \_\_\_\_\_  
Ori In the Kitchen  
*Kate Montgomery*

Poster . \_\_\_\_\_  
Agony Aunts  
*Kate & Aimee*