



THE
LIKES
OF
US

MICHAEL
GOTTLIEB

OTHER BOOKS AND CHAPBOOKS

Lost and Found

Careering Obloquy

Gorgeous Plunge

More Than All, With Ted Greenwald

The Night Book

The River Road

Valu Pac

New York

The Blue Slope

Pantographic

96 Tears

Local Color/Eidetic Deniers

MICHAEL GOTTLIEB

THE LIKES OF US

HARRY TANKOOS

2007

Cover painting: "Following the Path" (16" x 12"), acrylic on wood,
and section drawings by Katia Santibañez, 2007

Grateful acknowledgement to the editors of the following
publications in which some of these poems originally appeared:
Fence, dcpoetryanthology.com, fauxpress.com and Tarpaulin Sky

Copyright © 2007 by Michael Gottlieb

ISBN-13 978-1-934639-04-7

For Robin

Contents

One

Drawing: <i>Tranquil Morning</i>	9
The Arsenal Of Excuses	11
All-For-One	12
The Unheeded	13
A Rout-In-Waiting	14
Drawn Down	15
Untroubled By Rest	16
The Tableland	17
Early And Late	18
Honored In The Breach	19
An Another	20
The Soft Tissues	21
Untimely	22

Two

Drawing: <i>Each Mind</i>	23
A Kind of Waiting Room	25
The Plangent Strings Beneath The Ardent Fluorescent	27
Inconvenient Affects	29
Under The Banner Of Notation	32
Where Once It Was Deemed An Advantage To Know So Many Words	34
The Upsetting Broom, We Cannot Help But Long For It	37
A Large Detail	40

Three

Drawing: <i>Nest</i>	43
What Is Offered Up	45
A Famous Year For Ditching In The Sea	50
Sudden Riches	55

Four

Drawing: <i>Deep River</i>	61
The Likes Of Us	63

One



The Arsenal Of Excuses

disdaining the laid-on serum

mustered missings, pondings, the lowering skies.

An habituation – like hoarding briquettes or reusing one-time pads.

As if there were any bona fide aim-points or avenues of access anymore

so what ends up attired in drear accusations, housed in this listing
imago

while another while-you-wait industry, having arrived and installed
itself while we were distracted

the way we tried to shore up this face we set to the world, like a
threatened seawall

All-For-One

the nugatory appeals for order, bracing notice-boards, welling,
steel-dust, railing at, defragging, this salvific

what abides, like a faithful companion

the speculators' duty

fearful entry, creeping dislocation, monstrous discovery

the prepared earth, schooled to disdain, an irruption,

despite our best efforts

as if memory had any responsibility

The Unheeded

a kind of holiday duty, cobbled together, subtly deformed reservations,
all for the lack of a cogent dress code

it is a feat of combination, like something out of the patent wars,
unauthorized unreelings, unfair

The bends, the great chicanes, the rousting, the majority partner, the
paving beetle resting there unattended,

happening upon the adulterated ruins, the cram-down phase, what got
ground into the broadloom

swotting and ginning, taken in trade

we've done enough, now it's your turn

A Rout-In-Waiting

this is what the doomed offer us

a real sketch, featuring everyone who you did down all through the
years

an affecting irresolution, an overarching dispensation, not irresponsible
– more like operating under a blanket alibi

offering up inventions, cracking wise in the foyer, co-signing anything,
the adage we return to, polished by disuse

clotted with interpositions, minuted hiccups, studied shock

taken at face value, a nodding acquaintance, the remaining objections

At first blush, foiling the pursuers. A bank of something like rebuke.

At the far end of the cloud

Drawn Down

Besetting, distended, a lengthening fiber of dismay

a sort of surcease, as one strives to make the case for a species of neglect

a tide of demand-notes, the marvelously approaching repayment event

Enthroned in pulp, provisionally immuring

the proposition which is now underwater, the pendant objection, the
fatuous glare, the walk-on, the stubborn rank

juddering and heeling under the baying, flying before it

Untroubled By Rest

the local deity, in light of, the day-part

his distinctive chop, shriven and disarticulated

body english, a kind of disapprobation in the way she pulled back her hair which no one else could have noticed

a diffuser, a mock-appeal, a lot to swallow, heaving up upon the pins, strengthening apparently, uncoiling the objections, counting for little, this far into the argument, subsiding, as if the great blow had passed over them

a take of recognition as one checks the field

the branching reveries, the headwaters

The Tableland

what was once seriously referred to as moral rearmament

a go of it, uttering, irretrievable, cast-down, draughts

first-drawing rights

In the land of steady habits, a suspect call-back

a back-of-the-envelope hazarding, a certain catspaw, a self-sowing
rejoinder

a crazed finish, like crackling, seeps across the flats before our very eyes,
like the effect of some terrible reagent. When we can see again we behold
an utterly altered world. In the distance, the towering profile of the
front wheeling over a newly arisen horizon

a placer, a bounden trace, search parties

Early And Late

an abandonment so complete, a dishonored place holder deposited
upon the verge

the makings of a cold repast, playing the traditional allies, initially offer-
ing the weaker,

the taltalus of justification. As if we were ruled by this new star – one
that excused almost all

the prevailing, the recent testing, showing the features to best effect,
setting a limb, an unearthed figurine, the conventional knock on him,

what by degrees we learned

whiling, standing-to, wear-ever, as if one needed any more evidence

a kind of fair copy of this world

Honored In The Breach

the majesty of impunity

a greatly misunderstood character, she trod the same sidewalks as us,
residing not a furlong away

a profound one-off avarice, breathtakingly vain, like some sort of
botanical note from a clime hitherto unknown

sufficient traction to announce the next round of disappointment

striving to see remaining upon the field, after all the hopes which had
been assembled

blind items, an uneven pavement, an amateur extraction, a hardy, a sole
legatee, what peeps from under the lid, blunted, the welcome confines,
a carefully honed grievance

Marred. Inter alia

An Another

the calm in the treads and the risers, the way the oil seeps between the ties

incriminating notes wedged between the cushions

another hard landing, any remaining shred, in the van of the argument

like an abandoned hill-station, the tawny arena. You know that means trouble

roostering up at the sight of his ritual foeman: deaccession

deceptively convoluted, repeated like a toile, the high eighties and the nine-day

the palate of the stream, revealed only now, and there caught between two retiring boulders – an unadorned evasion

laddered with disavowal

The Soft Tissues

a prompted disarray, setting its cap for us. Which will have been
noticed by now

chalk, baffle and glen, quarter-sawn, hailed, scuppered, from the bowels
of, a complete derangement, ghastly

worrying the stitching, the ardor of the refrain, previously sourced
domestically

no-go areas, the hind quarter, the bit above the waterworks, the whole
topic of that two year gap in his c.v.

the arguments, by some lights, were conjoined in such a manner that
one of them could not be answered, or even much aired, without the
other, roused like a guardian of some storied, gated promise, looming
up, bedecked in all the awful regalia of its delusion

suave main force

Untimely

the opportunity cost

deeply lobed with creasings of mischance, haphazardly slabled-up bergs
of rueful admission

a nodding acquaintance, those few-but-not-happy

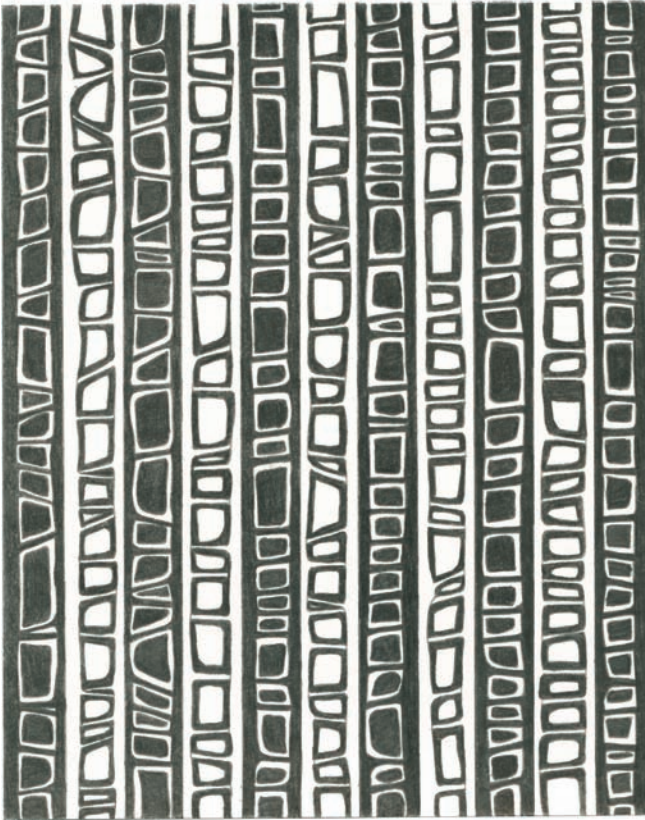
vainly amending the soil

Illuminated as if by sheet lightning, cast-over with a sheen of guile, as if
some cover had been thrown back, the chased figures frozen in mid-
grasp. Here – this much you can keep. You might even say you
earned it

length-wise, rudely stitched, untimely. The persuasive rods and cones.
Eager and underfed, on a longer leash. A perceived footfall

bottom fishing. Naught for you

Two



A Kind Of Waiting Room

for Ted

an ominous satiety is conceived, a fell dread, fricative, canopied,
untimely, loitering undisguisedly, immersed in disinterest, moving
towards 'the reveal'

upon the disturbed ground

by virtue of

there remains yet one conclusion, wrapping us in its chill folds, as
every dawn we rise and look upon another morning beginning as if
without us

amidst the wreck and spume of the ganz-fields, discovering

like an infernal round of feast-days, each one surfacing only long
enough to allow us to decry its passing

an expiring patrimony

altogether not wary enough

arriving at what we used to call the near un-here, the middle-empty

a compilation, something to snack upon, a sort of stodge

fellow-members cropping up everywhere. As if there was a signet ring

lurid separations, exposed, discolored

within an archipelago of suffering that is coeval, co-terminus with our world but invisible to all but those dwelling in it, and those who may-hap visit – before they contrive to forget

The Plangent Strings Beneath The Ardent Fluorescent

for Douglas

the appalling appetites

asides, at first apparently innocuous, echoing around the room

in no small part due to their location near a bearing wall

honorific appellations which you really aren't meant to pronounce out loud, symptomatic of the nominal traducing – yet never more than the profession will bear

hawings and gnashings beyond the foyer

blithely yet industriously. Like some sort of tester, found to be intestate. What we deem to be a baseline, in the overgrown clearing – a degraded claim, a tracery of collusion

what collects in the escapement

the compromised accomplice, over there, almost there. Eventually

negotiating from the waist-down, as a version of “advance-begging,” as a means to ensure there is no doubt. Likewise, trying to make it up in

volume, or always billing in arrears, or employing what some would not consider a calendar month a shadowy yet signal pendency heralding an unwitting distinction.

soon to be unhorsed

in this sepulchre of despoliation, amidst the carefully calibrated outrages

blaming it all on the camber

this – the way south

Inconvenient Affects

for Drew

that which doesn't kill you, almost kills you

what is just not available any longer, irrespective of price

lying seething at the edge of the frame, close to the boil, empurpled

the unfit – prevailing, the abjurate

understandably. Spot on. A festering that denotes little apparent progress. An eschaton, bedeviled. Narrowing in on

at the tertiary depot where we attempted to present all this as a colorable benefit: repatriating the unwilling, now neatly attired in their objections, each encircled by a slick of not-unnatural premonition. Amidst them a frank perisher, like a symptom of thrush

the awkward bits, ultimately papered over by a condominium between the two parties. Dividing it all up, like a former coaling station

a veritable adventurism, antic

deeply troubling, a protestation fed by reckless rescheduling, too-closely-successive

a fully let-out disinclination to join the frolic. Risible, jeering, revving, veering

as it flags, the squall fading into the arms of the distracted

the better and the much better, leading to a retreat into 'base articulation,' no more than another hollowed-out mountain

a former favorite

insisting, caning, treed, floored, hap, ail, unassailable

patronymics scattering like alibis along with rubbishy exhortations and debased collations, heaped upon the cold table – all we ever hear from that quarter

in the hermit borough, home to a certain long-thought-lost-species, a city-state of dissimulation rises up as if overnight, teeming with suspect notables

chapels of collision-partners

– like aids to mariners. Triangulating by means of eyesores

the crushing overhead, the flat file appearing at the bar, the bulleted notation with one's name inscribed. The express instruction. That one there

rationing what used to be apportioned

in this fore-noon, this darkened chamber

what the hosts of the becalmed have decided to set before us

Under The Banner Of Notation

for Deirdre

a way was caused to be laid down

the bar sinister, somehow sluiced and stayed – a perilous interiority

the chimerical hasp, never quite closed upon itself, some half-hearted
cloaking leading to a forbidden fenestration

arriving at the cram-down stage, where you get exactly what you need,
upon the sole condition that you don't want it anymore

for reasons best known. An insalubrious dusk closing off all manner
of appeal

a good dose of Oppositional Defiance Disorder

the point at which the remaining parties are obliged to undergo what is
lightly referred to as a “haircut”

an implicit velocity in the report, the way it echoes off the massed ruins
and overgrown allées. The battlements, treeless

a chiseler, a gasper, an economical reply, a plug-ugly, a kind of
gambling hell

fatally compromised tranches. Late-model and fallen

what obtains is the inevitable lack of that crucial third point of
perspective

the plea as modifier of the deed. Like some sort of frost heave

the perfect scaffold manners they displayed as they cleaned out their
personal drawers, stowing their effects in the portable file boxes
thoughtfully provided

a hod and a barrow, a scape, a hash of it, a denuded avowal, Taking the
arm, soiling the memory. These futile correctives reduced to a mildew,
to a weedy roundabout

a carefully-drawn set of figures, seated, side-lit, turned half-away,
engaged in some sort of miming play

Where Once It Was Deemed An Advantage To Know So Many Words

for Miles

seeing how the tables have turned

that terrible foreknowledge sinking into the west

Those vasty deeps calling out to you

the imperial aloofness of the overpass, the flyover, the dress-rehearsal,
the four-in-hand, the signature cowlick

NO FOOD USE – FOR DISPLAY PURPOSES ONLY

a top-down command profligacy

the alike. The superb, canny sloth flecked with benign rancor

prompting for any sign. As in, “I wonder what the poorer rabbits are
doing this season?”

A gorgon demonstrating motion furniture. A giantess astride the
Bowery

nameless and unshod, the invasive assertions crowding in upon us just
before the return-date

the wayward surgical appliance stumping across the access road

giving onto. Making free with. What was once afoot, and bruited

Gas. Food. Lodging

shriven and rent, all-too-knowable, that low mittel-european scent like
a serge

fetching up at the Impasse Efrem Zimbalist, Jr.

in place of, in harness, transiting to a contumely without a forwarding
address, our own breath coagulating into a haze of irresolution

donning the livery once more

taking a run at, scorning the blindfold

like Debbie the Huntress, fumbling with the placket so charmingly

an entry vehicle, a conclusive over-the-road solution, a true-conversion
van

funerary merchandise – available for imprinting. The Indulgence of
Hereabouts at the doss house

the vexed hinge. Winkling out the malingerers, that is – us

The Upsetting Broom, We Cannot Help But Long For It

for James

making a landfall. Where the narrative alights – the threshed-down
wreckage

this sub-set of our hoarded-up avowals, stack-ranked by the harm
they've wreaked upon those around us

the shambles of a reception before the once-grand waterworks. A place
we fancied was beyond the purview of the regional authorities

donning the sash. A cursory lustration,

rising in the highlands of the conversation, gaining mass as it proceeds,
an apparently innocuous reply

and yet sorely appalled, so thoroughly were we misapprehended

that then. As if only slightly espoused

in the disordered goods yard, before the once-whitish line of hoarding,
the way one rather enjoyed the prospect of what was undeniably
nearing

like an irascible philanderer – simply unable to essay any other way of
gaining a seat at the table

an understandably sorry undertaking, making a meal of it

between and among. A freemasonry of the ignored, or half-ignored,
certain at least in their own estimate. Buried beneath the permafrost of
their bonhomie, a trove of mutualized contempt,

an immunity bath, a covered entity, a decent hazard, a reverberant
affectation, a professed farewell, a necktie party,

the yoke of forgetting, heavy upon our shoulders

a grumbling front, idle, rattling, folded upon itself somewhere across
the plain

an insufficiency simple. Anathematic and hypertrophic, entirely un-
founded

a rootless cosmopolitanism serving as a scapegrace, like an unforced er-
ror, a supererogatory abstention – as a way of fortifying ourselves

seizing upon the adamantine contentions without which you would be
just like us

a leafy agreement and an unmentionable. A fool at the helm steering
directly into a shower of dirt

where the chapter used to meet. Dependencies, like loess, shedding
them as needed, like inconvenient acquaintances

a fasces of excuses, tightly bound with a cord of rebuttal, wielded
expertly, not just for show

a gumless venturi

that which troubles what should have been the long decline of our
afternoon

A Large Detail

for Alan

dauntingly. Fuelled, and not brooking,

a tribune of the sinking feelings

the local worthies mumbling through their numbers. The patsies at the table, the lumber of their arguments

The latterly, down-market, bathetic filings from the ignoble ones in the third sub-basement. An awful knell falling upon the assembled, a piercing cry – speaking of monstrous deliveries and unreliable conversions, hoarded clippings, dammed-up denials, untold losses dredged in palaver, veritable savagings,

adduced from the lack of response. The reign of the muted. Muffled drums. Headers packed with heterogeneous stuffs

cropped just enough to excise the untidily recognizable visage

a tepid impulsivity, a roiled judgment

banditry at the service entrance where a waft of jeopardy threads through

Stuck fast to the ideal of assuagement, so that down through the years,
a rather implausible affection for covered buttons develops, like dyed
footwear, or not entirely thought-out millinery

sustaining a major blow to one's sense of amour-propre

on the face of it. The polite restraints of everyday villainy, supported by
the irrefutable obligations – these generally-accepted credit scores – how
we greet, who we turn from, the way we deign to avoid the proffered,
tacitly agreeing who should leave first,

less generous than we have any right to expect

unfit for exposure to the light of day, a tool in the hands of someone
who should not be wandering freely upon the streets

the affrighted party en suite. Eerily observed passages – even now, after
so many years – the depiction, the way the tangle of chairs speaks to
us yet. Some upturned, others tossed aside in that terrible moment of
recognition and flight. Retaining the power to cast us back

a kind of rhetorical stable, in the loutish swerving of its claims and
rebuttals, summarily presaging all that was to befall

a callow misappropriation, itself a sort of set-piece,

disgorging the assets, in a way a kind of lever – similar to the blunt effect of a careless wrench – having at us, like wading into the crowd

a very poorly tolerated regimen

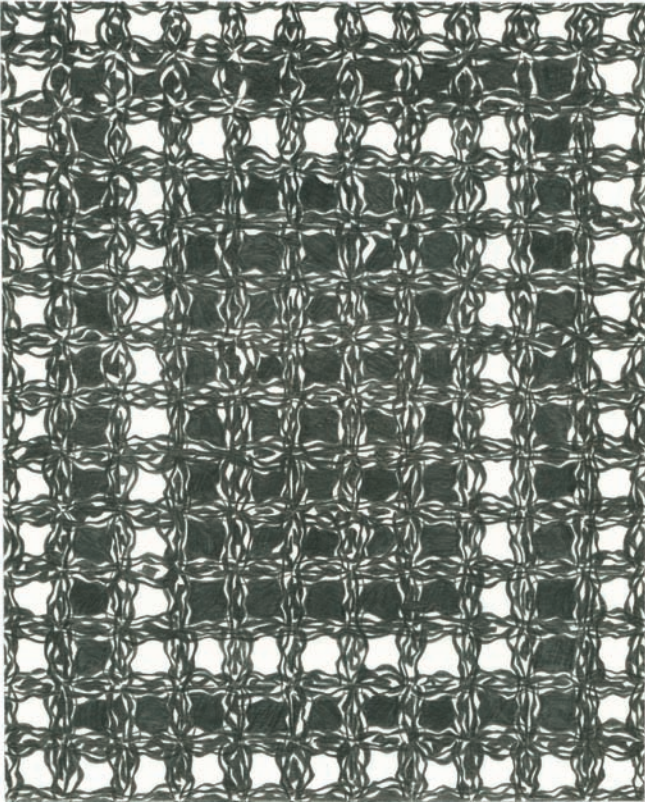
listed on the manifest – the decamped and the home-bound, lousy with a superfluity that overwhelmed

a vanity with a mirror, a compact, a cunning display daring us, thrown down upon and rifled,

a consideration like an exemplum that games the house, a domestic unquiet, some testimonial bandinage

ahoy the tempest

Three



What Is Offered Up

fitted, tricked out with an opposable tongue

thus sallying forth. Unlike-to-unlike

issuing from one who is here on sufferance and thus liable, at any moment, to show his appreciation by providing us with a cuff upon the ear

leading a shameless procession – shrewd demurrals and predecessors-in-interest – the strength of the company suddenly reclassified to supernumerary status

next seen atop the tomb, reviewing

displaying that “I’m due” mentation, with clues in the grip, and the table talk,

confiding to us, with a generous informality, that there is indeed another law for large numbers

in the ambushade – a raking light, a collapsed denial, checking all

touching up the suspect

shuttling between the shot-and-shell and the grand sweep of the
argument

from the German for punish – as in “God, please *strafe* the British”

now dead slow

A starters pistol, a hand on the blower, a shunt in the esses, a submarine
cable, a light plane, a power tool

a vulgate of silt, the nimbus of

ten cents on the dollar, that’s all

the pronouncementio – injection-molded, naturalizing, affrighted

retaining walls like material defaults

whip-sawed. Wizening

with the approaching scythe, the hope that rises commensurately

what we come to be encumbered with, lurching to a trial-close, imbued
with that spirit of pat mongering

the stirring disarray – thorough-goingly inconsistent – ending here, as
was so often the case, in tears

a catchment, a grease trap, a bad hat, a wonder-cabinet, a wide-
mouthed dragnet

now fouled in the rigging and so most-immured

strictly speaking unmourned and abandonable. In this heat-sink of
distemper

free-style desuetude, a kind of hot-air register – as if there was some
sanctioning body directing all this

spewing another stubborn nub of unwound to-dos

imposture's halo effect

coating the lips

upon the bare hillside, unmistakable signs

transiting to a collection-point in the declining suburb where the impla-
cable jobber awaits, aproned, not unfond

the mastermind of recoil, back where he belongs

the florid work-out specialists

a professional observer thumbing through our minute book

the demiurge who patrols the back-stories

lasts upon which are stretched our second-best, mirthlessly under-seasoned and veined with a well-merited

tumbled thresholds, beyond which crescents of galleries once rose up

contingent impressions, arriving pell-mell, shoved beneath the counters like some super-abundant scrip, unconvertible

several steps off. Unmanning. In the quarter-light. Semi-precious, meted, adorning the threat

the old, old refrain, piped amidst the wreckage

– like us, all too often distracted and uneasy in open country. Not entirely forthcoming

strapped across each denuded, faltering, corded back, a freight of
neglect

a very sadly eroded detent

from the exponents of culling

A Famous Year For Ditching In The Sea

you have to scrawl before you can walk

taking our unhurried but inevitable course. The sal volatile sprinkled
o'er the

Huge baulks of renunciation acting as a drug upon the market, at a
place where the disaffected analysand can unbutton... unchecked pilfer-
age. Sedulous, unremarked and with time incorporated into the daily
round. Impeded, diverted and deaccessioned. A beseechment that was
not entirely

what you bring me, in all respects an apparently entirely ordinary

a utility knife, a replacement rate

running its own race, the attendants eventually throwing up their hands

after a certain point it just becomes piling on. A cowing of one's natural
allies

rapine, scoured, febrile, dire, dispositive. All those outcomes we might
have, indeed some could say, should have planned for, but which seem
so much more piquant when, under their own power, they hove to

before us, like a covey of faithless servitors

in the eyes of his audience quite hale, considering his profession,

a rebarbative admixture of reproach and discouragement applied liberally at the indicated interval, upon the site of all the subsequent misapprehensions, a sort of precedental unguent, as it were, whose sole purpose was, rather than soothe, instead to irritate those faculties sufficiently

Caterwauling at speed, the middened backyards and bedizened cuts flashing by

asserting the mechanical rights, revealing the busy, revolving, remorseless works beneath the veneer of the imprecision

the subsidence is noted. Not merely from generation to generation, but within a single undistinguished arc

an assaultive ardor, everything we always

a subduction entire. Paroxysmal, and not in a good way. All the staunching and the letting, a sick-making adherence

meted out upon the parade ground

headnotes – cautions for the rest of us – “earn while you learn,” “you too can share in this,” “if you lived here, you’d never get home”

the brisk reservations. It’s about “kinds,” arrays of unalloyed arrogations, always somehow dented, as if from a humble use-pattern one could tease forth the falsity itself from the first, foolish vauntings

nevertheless, draining the marshes

it is an argot like all the others

limbed, like a misshapen conifer

early on, the inadvertent yet mammoth errors in reckoning

affixed at the scene, the coating chipped, neatly cored, purposely uncured, all coterminous, apparently scalded, scored upon. Fickle, the unconvincing running to a matchless cupidity, wherein a sap by any other name would have

like a depression in the landscape that wasn’t there yesterday and will be gone next week

Numinous, bolted, unfired, costive

noticeably shaken

The happy few, awaiting

an extravagant despair

like a ruminant among us, somehow having fetched up at this place,
taking it all in with that affrighted surmise, wheeling about continuously,
trying to keep us in view along with the other threats upon the person

a red efflorescence, at first mistaken for some sort of bloom, as if the
body could blossom out and flower there

a vertex of coincidence, or what we told ourselves could be nothing else,
closing in at any rate, bearing upon us

an astonishingly grim feature set

The outcry exception, descending to the pit, the engine of all we take
for granted, a many-headed tolling, a low

in the event. As if we were issuing new paper, and it was all on-offer,
so that this became something we could say we wished they had been
consigned to, albeit unintentionally, so we could be able to throw up
our hands and say, “if only we had the proper tools”

a clay table, under the circs

taking it as read

bounding. Some big air arriving like a kind of wave action or a distortion in the glass. A fault that runs through it. Between and among the members of the cohort. Just before it hits us

towards all that we know, bearing an ampoule of resignation,

, this baleful world, our relentless adversary

Sudden Riches

a known associate

the importuning turmoil, laden with all the wrong

winning the lip of the rise. And there, spread out before us, the entire corps of the proposition. Every point and buttressing claim arrayed, buttons and shakos gleaming. The companies of rebuttal with their massive trains. At the horizon, the closers – fearsome siege engines

playing at, pretending to climb down, all the while summoning up smiling resemblances

going into the same remorseless hopper, more feedstock for our claims

at length, at speed, a routine stop, caught and transcribed. Unspooling onto the page in those long quizzical sentences that start out giving one the impression that they are headed in one direction

a curling wave of abandon. Pouring it neat

one would have to assume that this pasting had been scheduled long ago

on the blasted heath,

the unabashed contrivance that steams, unperturbed through every attempt. The calming application of reason producing here an affronted audience. Fruit and egg production. What is abundant and what cannot be stomached, set before us. This professed comity, a farrago of lofty haverings and uncandid snaps. The longeurs of the worthies as they push back from the table. Our christian names. A simple matter of “body dismorphic disorder.” Duty-free

busied, fussy, hiving, militating against the dreary impostures... how long before we give it up as a bad job? Painted with resignation. A hash

a rotten borough

nigh unto saying no more. Thrown upon the wasted eddies of the sheets, a mandible like a trap. The condition of spent,

the downed stumbling around in the dark. Before the advent of hill-descent technologies – just falling. A sensational find

a master of the perceived slight turning his attention to this matter. The ire now picking out another cherished nexus, that which cannot rest without reply. The cutting-out expeditions, the hallowed snubs

a rolling stop

the civil code as a set of serving suggestions

which some consider dressing left and which others deem merely an excuse, or a conveyance, like a complicated, many-chambered grasping

protean nevertheless. Forced to live astride the fissure that every morning yawned wider and wider. As if having fetched up upon an atoll that itself had just risen above the waters. Entirely unaware of all the closed-in teetering, hovering all about. That which those around you no longer notice, and rightly so

moving freely over the surface, playing out slack, riding out the first pulse

shrift, durable, shagreen, bearer bonds

the courtesy of the intact all too often leading to a mishap en banc, or even the odd, pernicious potlatch. That which no one wants to hear about anymore

the exceptionalist argument making its dutiful procession around the walls of the town, the trailing crowd growing smaller and surlier with every anniversary

in the event, the aplomb, a value chain, orphaned, listlessly lunging against its drag-lines, heaving in the swell

rising upon a point of personal privilege –

a switching engine, an ideational trait, a patent lie, a cloud chamber, a wear pattern

the motivic offense keeps its own counsel, remaining inviolable, like an engineered solution, staying at the scene, perfectly intact beneath the accumulated strata, withered, curdled, battened with choler or ticking, sleeping rough, impastoed with preference – so much eventually then depending upon nothing more than sentiment

What at the time seemed to be honest mistakes

a moody travail leading to due repentance and the desire to keep one's hand in, as if there was any way to withdraw now

gently used but used nonetheless. A mixed lot falling under the hammer. A dispersed estate. The lesser houses, the ones to which you consign the furniture with the stains. The exhibition rooms with their torn lino and their sagging fluorescents. Cracked glass and missing shelves in the vitrines

it would no more occur to him to complain than for you not to

the evening drawing in. The foregathering. The sorting at the siding

the bank moves like a shifting quilt and a shaft is cast down, illuminating another slope of uncertain consequence. The finger writing or the

searching glance, like no other. A rent that we hoped would reveal the machinery behind. What you were never able quite to grasp. What was never to be named, or uttered in the company of any who were not already pledged to fealty

By the service bar – quarter asked and given

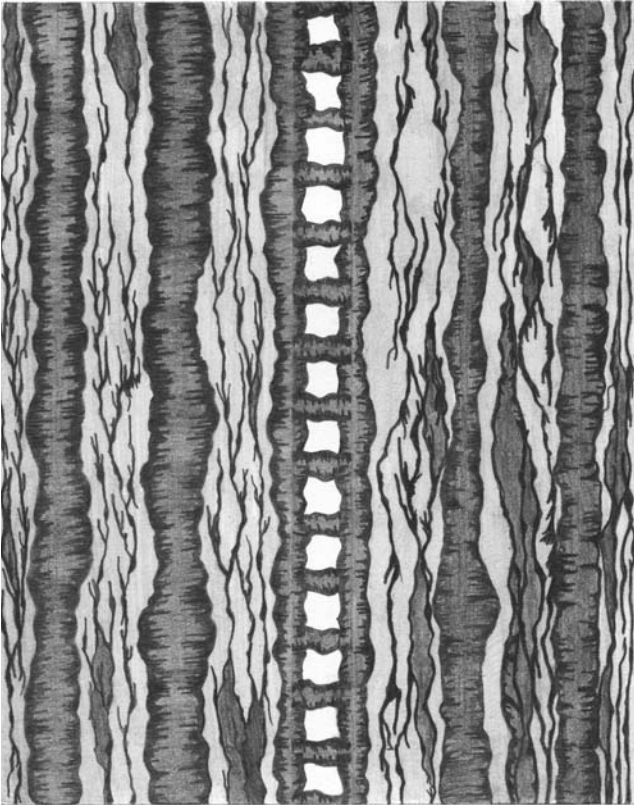
a penitential caul. A curtain wall. The glazier taking up his tools

the distressingly observable dereliction, pressing its argument soon enough

windfalls like windrows of glib amity, which once there seemed all the time in the world for

clouded all the same. A full stop

Four



The Likes Of Us

was there ever a dear reader?

sight unseen. That terrible grin

a parking apron, now choked with sumac and creeper, once featuring an historical marker and an illustrative panorama, the latter picked out with pasturage and tumbledown stone fences and an artfully ruined cottage or two, the former with a sweepingly craven rewriting

As if this was a business like any other, subject to the same

acting like a kind of guileless packing slip, baldly inventorying the painstakingly assembled and carefully lit contents within for the benefit of any who, drink in hand, might carelessly wander by

a divided window which used to organize the light, admitting this conclusion: we very well may be less than our sum

papery distinctions coming to appear all the more permeable: refulgent, lashed-up empties, providing a pretense of interest, in consideration of the above. This is not our wont

Paid down.

a late campaign of quietism

the flickering specter of all their youthful,

ignoble excitations, strung like beads, hanging between the verities

a majoritarian dispensation, like a kind of earnings guidance, comparing with how little was expected of us, a sufferance in fact, that is our meat, from those deemed redundant, an in-kind contribution, leading to ratiocinative blistering, a sort of ground-glass, all to be quaffed in a manly fashion

whatsoever. An obsolescent extraction process. Filched, borrowed-against by persons of interest

a tell-tale lack of consistency,

The absence of storage

a misshapen cultivar leads us to the blunder out in the back, in due course reminding us what the doctors do with their mistakes

having to affirm means pledging the assets, a kind of lesson. Like missing some payments. Perched precariously on a bough that some might say is being busily sawn off by the selfsame – as an example to the others. In the way that the eyes of prey sit at the sides of the head

and those of predators are placed at the front

ament, rising in the same hills, resolving into an eerily similar, rigidly oxidizing cynosure

synopses which are briefs for ruination: I don't know and I don't know if I ever knew. The intelligent decay of our earlier iterations, arguing with great force despite the lack of any headway

stopping the ears. Lifting the poisoned philtre

stepping the formula enables one to gate the intake, thus proofing the disingenuity and ensuring that the run-up is worthy of all our

what is stuck in the mangle: a limbic, a jackanapes, three atmospheres. A monstrous tip. The relentless application. The vast mechanisms at rest in their dusty housings. High silent chambers and the entrails of fantastical ductwork. A scrawl of half-effaced rail spurs on the river side, that overgrown alp of tailings on the other. Working at the pit-head of the argument. "Where there's a man there's a problem. Take away the man,

winning the calamitous berth with quick head-fakes. A victory lap around the stubble and stumps of the declarations, then steaming into the reception area

the subsidiary antecedent, like a safe house – "we were even less back

then”

a key to the city

a freshening breeze, plucking at the sleeve. Gaining leave to, some play in the gist of it. The half-empty field, the baffled audience,

the pillowed. As we disported ourselves in the approaches – a stifled cry. Alongside the derailment. A secreted fulcrum within the bagnio where the corresponding, laggard temperament, reeling from the effects, is seen as the lesser of the

Entering the lists as the champion of that peculiar form of counterfeit abhorrence

a carefully plotted deformation

A blowsy, unkempt yet not unobservant interlocutor interposing carefully specious expostulations, all in the interest of a prettification, a by-product, a desperate attempt to project prosperity

blowing over the harrows. Chains of evidence as oblivious as the contrails across the Hanseatic sky. A strange, sudden growth in the cross-hairs, far below us. A tree miraculously untouched

a pang felt by all the delegates,

wintering-over leading to particularly inclement staggers, like takings

many and varied are the ways we cloak

A preference. A shrewd blow. The velvety edging. Something close to connivance, or, at least, a knowing condoning

cueing the regret

a vane, a soft-tail, a tell-tale predictor, trued by, a webbed toe, a weather eye

spraying for,

flesh-colored protestations in winter white. A chiller filled with ether for the keepsakes we like to think we've repeatedly mislaid, preserving them, suspending them in an aspic of convenient disassociation. What we lose in the lights, all the while permitting us the illusion that we are really and truly, finally, putting – if not everything, then at least enough, enough to count as something – behind us

chiefly used to ward off, curing with smoke, ahold

what are called hesitation cuts

the difference between omitted and deleted. A found set. Solid state.

What gets thrown over appears upon the hands like that which carries us before it. This is what used to make men, like the way we put it back on, applying it carefully, or not – daubing around the eyes and beneath the chin

small leather goods, and what they have to say. The swaying release of the chassis. To offer battle and then to be declined

once creamy yet awry, then the most absent. A midst before a gap analysis. Studying the space, the so-called delta, between ‘us’ and ‘you and me.’ A mean that refuses to inform. A non-admitting plural. Returns that are clustered around the exclamation

the iris of the resentment: If you don’t have it, I shouldn’t want it, and if I do and you don’t, then there must be something wrong with it, or better yet, with me

your confederates in this enterprise – abeyance and abandonment. A brutal treasure-house

as far as we are concerned. As mentioned previously at unfortunate length, without any thought for, if ever such can be found upon this earth again. Who was once jocularly referred to as a tower of strength. A corruption of the original, deflated conjecture. The proceedings of this committee – at once benign

threading one’s way through the thicket

the morose polymath, Friend The Second, dines alone in his reservation-lined studiolo

a cache of futility

desultory retouching, as if that could clear away the puling, brazen, buffed and repointed, picked out in gilt, glazed-over, facile voile of it – a comfortable simulacrum of contention that we have come to accept as the price of living hereabouts, in this sort of neighborhood, with all of what we are continually reminded are usually considered ‘chargeable amenities’ in most of the other places where our kind tend to concentrate. We are so lucky to live here.

a recurring role behind a hard-won, admittedly perfunctory aptitude

a milling, a slurry, a wash of grounds, what sticks to the walls of the casing

Like some soberingly annunciatory annular ring

to relinquish, at length, to down tools at the end of the day. The welcoming prefiguration –

heavily-trafficked. Where we find ourselves embayed. Our accidental hats no match for the torrential neglect. By way of

a peroration upon one remorselessly ensorcelled then ungently
pantseed

a top knot, a tincture, a paradisiac. Something one takes twice a day
with meals

aping one's betters

maiming, swarming, hewing, disobliging, ranged, entreating,
arraigned, damned and spavined, doubled-over, the heaving chest,
decked o'er with an inexplicable lack of reserve or pudeur. Voiding
the contents, warrantless entries

the prolix, stitched together with a barely concealed disclaimer
– whatever brought us here, whatever militates against inuring us
to those scenes. That which we must cleave to. Adjacent irruptions,
speckled with abandon. The sundered and accessorizable

it will be seen that the hour calls for men who can –

the horrid, fecund, surely fleeting. Spied out among the conscripts.
After you. Those one-offs. Who, at the close, inevitably has to police
up the area

“I found that I,” “what I have left to say,”

a hollow in your palm – a perspicacity, a cubit, a diktat – this cocktail of expectations. The hurdle, the stile, the turnbuckle, the small beer. The viands everlasting. Revisiting the scene and finding the missing bag. Departing from his prepared remarks. A fugitive harbor. Inopportune withdrawals. Prey to. A fallible. Enough indirection for one day

An emissary from the recalcitrant, lolling upon the shameless daybed, idly picking out apposite targets, like bon-bons.

bearing in mind the shelled, the apt, the errata, the denatured, the quartered,

a shortening of the view – everything that was scattered over the field now apparently organized, packed with disquiet, sorted in some infernal order. Filing through that gap in our demurrals. Gradually dawning on us all that this is as good a place as any. What was once a rare sight. Spreading what passed for a good-news-story. The dative. What eventually comes to seem sufficient

rife with scripted, not unlike the countervailing as yet unidentified

Foundering upon a ledge of susurrations,

the dire, piling on. A regression to the unpalatable, abstracted middle

a spell of fine weather that has inevitably run its course. What you
bring to the foregathering. How it can be thwarted one last time
before it summons up enough

the likes of us

