



Lightning'd Press | Issue Two

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Issue Two

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For Henry Corbin

"...on the boundary between the two we have a twofold twilight: the *crepusculum vespertinum*, no longer day but not yet night; the *crepusculum matutinum*, no longer night but not yet day. This striking image, as we know, was used by Luther to define the being of man."

(from *The Man of Light*)

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Introduction

Preface to Notes on Ta'wil and Apocalypticism

"[T]he cycle of prophetic Revelation is closed, no new shari'a, or religious Law, is awaited. But the literal and apparent text of this ultimate Revelation¹ offers something which is still a potency. This potency calls for the action of persons who will transform it into act[...]. It is an initiatic mission; its function is to initiate into the ta'wil. And initiation into the ta'wil marks spiritual birth. Thus prophetic Revelation is closed, but precisely because it is closed, it implies the continued openness of prophetic hermeneutics, of the ta'wil, or intelligentia spiritualis." -- Henry Corbin, Alone with the Alone

In the traditions of Islamic Gnosis, the concept of ta'wil is paramount. Defined by Corbin as "the exegesis that leads the soul back to its truth", it is broadly understood as the procedure thru which one can deconstruct the elements of a text to uncover its core meaning; and thru that process to deconstruct one's "soul" or ego in order to realize the return to Truth / God / Tao / Buddha-nature / etc. An actual text (such as the Qur'an, or a poem, or Battlestar Galactica) is naturally not needed, if all of contingent reality is understood as manifestations of the Word, the Mantra of God, the Vibrations of Dharmakaya, or whatever. However, the initial practice is often to preform ta'wil with a text--done both discursively and/or intuitively--as a preparation to perform (and the opening stages of performing) ta'wil on oneself, one's surroundings, history, etc.

"Ta'wil is essential symbolic understanding, the transmutation of everything visible into symbols, the intuition of an essence or person in an Image which partakes neither of universal logic nor of sense perception, and which is the only means of signifying what is to be signified." --Henry Corbin, ibid

This mode of reading can, of necessity, also be understood as the procedure of writing. Robert Kelly has suggested that the act of writing a poem as being a "ta'wil of the first line". We can go further, and say that the first line is the ta'wil of the first word; the first word the ta'wil of the first letter. Or expand: the book as the ta'wil of the first poem, etc. This movement goes backwards and forwards, as we understand all poems to be the ta'wil of all proceeding poems, of Shelley's Poem, just as it has been said that the Qur'an is the ta'wil of its first Sura, al-Fatiha, and that al-Fatiha is the ta'wil of the first ayat, Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim, and the first ayat the ta'wil of the first word (Bismillah), and the first word the ta'wil of the first letter (B); just as it has been said that all of contingent reality is the ta'wil of the Qur'an.

¹ Corbin is here referring to the Qur'an, but is a simple matter to extrapolate this and understand any and all texts as "potencies" in exactly the same way. --eds.

The importance of this concept for Apocalypticism can not be underestimated. In the Introduction it was suggested that Apocalypticism must be grounded in method, a practical way of working that absents the Ego so that Reality can break thru in the revelatory expanse of the poem under hand. Here, in ta'wil, in the poem as exegesis that leads the soul back to its truth, in the poem as text to be written-read in the procedure of ta'wil, we find a possibility.

Note on the Text

Our press is the ta'wil of Ronald Johnson's *The Shrubberies*; Peter O'Leary's essay, "Apocalypticism: A Way Forward for Poetry"; all of the poets and the work they've brought forth; literature that we love; and my father reading to me every night from Frances Hodgson Burnett and Beatrix Potter. It is the ta'wil of our births and our every moment preceeding this one. Right now.

My poem in this issue is the ta'wil of meditation and my initiation into Sufism,

It is fascinating to us to trace back through time and space to the birth and soul of what is.

It is illuminating. And darkening. We can watch the shifting of these moments unfold into tangible things yet intangible.

In creating this project, we have marveled at the poems we've received, the poets who have submitted their work, the support from the poetry community, yet all of it is part of a ta'wil we have yet to trace and that is magnificently untraceable.

Peter agreed to be interviewed, and our process for doing it is also a form of ta'wil. We ask a question, and he answers. We do not have set questions we want to ask. Instead, we are allowing the questions to flow naturally in the form of a conversation rather than a preconceived idea of the information we would like to know. In this way, each answer is a ta'wil of the next question.

We have again included the biographies and names of the poets at the end, laying out the poems randomly in order to support our strivings toward overcoming the ego.

Because I Do Not Hope to Turn
for Robert Kelly, Ash Wednesday 2010

The urge though not an urgency
to stay at the edge of the said.

A mere thread. Stitch dropped. Bracket creep.
Like the common cold, relief is its only comfort.

Is that the cat? Not.
An up turned terra-cotta pot.

The actual. This. Happening.
One fleet second the rope's shadow was a spotted snake.

The car parked there all day
just drove up.

Trick of light? I woke from
forgetting a dream.

Some day. Month. Season
gone. Sudden moon. Through

branches. A headlight,
darting mouse as clear,

as real as a bank statement, a hawk
or an inventory. A passage in Egyptian.

Actual. An opening number or allergy.

Have you seen your immortal soul?
Use olive oil. Clean. Pure.

The World Revealed

And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together,
that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.

Cassis stained shirt. Chocolate.
Hand held out. Coin on the palm. The Tsar.
Mumbo. Jumbo. Sentences begin here.
Cache pots. Flower clocks appoint constant time.
Is there something wrong with me
who relishes all this plotlessness?
A moon very wide awake. Behind a cloud the sun.
Perplexity all linked by depth's hard bright angle.
Who can remember anything?
The President and the Maiden, name them.
Slam the door on Want.
Let Have out. Don't even think about
Hope and Innocence. It doesn't matter what they say.
One thing, the next. Side beside side.
Never light, low ceilings. Somewhere to leave.
Is this English? I mean the language.
The smooth course of love is never.
A dream, the voice said: Genesis 49, the first line.

Without warning. A gust of air. A door
blown open. The world revealed.
Like the bird dashes against the light,
a dependent clause slips upon the eyes.
An alley in the dark the door
opens onto, away from the crowd.
Here there is Charity. The thick of it.

How can we deny
the stars through the trees?

Not a house upon a hill
but lights in a night sky.

A draft comes from the door into the space I make with my hands
 - It's not a volitional act; always
 I'm under instruction
 - by the land. Lying down pastures
 green encompass. We go - we sleep in a tent. Why? For? The sky's all blue.
 Driven five miles from the border. Every grave labelled proud grave of hope
 - and appreciation
 - That is worth. Changed everything
 - by being. There are three, is three
 - multiplicities ... whenever the
 home
 - becomes full of shearers, it only
 needs one, I'm over here, by the noble gum, by the frame of the picturesque in
 case I need to duck out. The holy page has a large Spanish cross on it, scored
 with an axe. Poems flow down the white cliff ... trees fall on landrovers tractors
 super gets sucked into nostrils in the spring wind. The ex-patriate returns when
 the patriarch dies, a few marriages take place ... will readings, video burnings
 [in what sense?] A performance will take place
 - on the screen, the actors arrive
 from Hollywood, there are words, but little in the way of syntax, grass seeds
 stuck to the hand
 - to the gears. The beer
 - the distraction. Sounds of a
 different kind of performance. Something's tangled in the washing ... it's how
 you end things
 - by taking the keys / the rough with
 the smooth, the technological - I went to school, the law. That's what I saw at
 Mass, there was a man and a woman, there was no difference except for
 - I felt removed from the tragedy
 the land again, I went back to the school and shook someone's hand. As if it
 would stop me writing, that was a personal action, like an insect made through
 the all-encompassing, the dry so much life
 - It couldn't be seen from the
 window and there were shutters if you were lucky, or cranes, keep saying, take it
 over to them, boost the past

the last four things are these

the last four things are these:
we are dying; death is kindness
—kindness; trite.

all the little woes have
sung themselves to sleep,
leaving us with fatter,
numbered griefs.

from *The Ardor*

the first
age, satya-yuga
in the nafs
al-mutma'inna
& so on down to
the kali-yuga
of the nafs al
anmara traversing
upward
thru the lost cities
& continents
of our world by the
being
the presence the
content on looking the
hearing until
its done in on one
side lifting
the head spins back
& forth along the
y axis
z
burst

Back From a Long Journey

Mattress of five knots! I sing you,
a younger brother & hell's leading candidate.
You are not so mortal, fulfilled here
while we trot
 earning the bicycle mother
a hammer.

I am not eventually interested in getting anywhere.
But the herring, exigent, looks out
through ambience
at the solid waste of Umbria
because of my soul.

When You Said Now

when you said 'now'
I said 'yes'

before the last episcopo

for as life
enwrapped in squid

became open,
oval

an accolade of white

that bent
film &

solved evening recess,
so too

the ample fizz

making acts
oro-

tund

The telescope salesman pitches woo
to the absolutes of solitude.
He doesn't dally with night
or with the intangible darkneses.
His comets are low-eyed and listless.
His planets are doors into the past,
where copper lights bleed amber
and Time's ministrations fail us all badly.

The poor sap going broke
by the deflected light of the half moon.
To whom the one-eyed astronomer
pays a very little and grudging respect.
Whole sections of the sky dimmed
where his stars have fallen.

- Is it, unto this place, the cow is driven.
- Is it, unto this place, the peace of nations is born.
- Is it, unto this place, the silver is dissolved and drunk for liver.
- Is it, unto this place, recant all guilt and live free.
- Is it, unto this place, napkins are pre-soiled.
- Is it, unto this place, the breath of caution, coming like the thief in moments of pause.
- Is it, unto this place, approaching the next doorway.
- Is it, unto this place, the door mat has been nailed, removed and nailed repeated by so much to loosen up the floor and make it as a sponge.
- Is it, unto this place, to be always searching for the next.
- Is it, unto this place, the nation is spawn.
- Is it, unto this place, to have removed the lump.
- Is it, unto this place, to the register of the kindred spirit.
- Is it, unto this place, secret powers of speaking and trance of long hours single things.
- Is it, unto this place, for failing testing levels variously of the various aspects qualities contrasting quantities and relevant hungers.
- Is it, unto this place, to the pushing away from the edge of every crack.
- Is it, unto this place, categorical attempted controlling.
- Is it, unto this place, resisting influence in upsurges as the lava or the puke to rise against the coming in cement.
- Is it, unto this place, the willingness, or, the wash, belief.
- Is it, unto this place, the elbows up, the grinding.
- Is it, unto this place, the site for seeing.
- Is it, unto this place, what purpose of the local identifiers, demographic and the pigment shift of smoke upwind.
- Is it, unto this place, the indigent.
- Is it, unto this place, the desire a man may have for a cartoon character.
- Is it, unto this place, retro-bait rebates costing cards and hiding fees.
- Is it, unto this place, a scattering of pellets, concentrates, dried composites.
- Is it unto this place, that it is a death to define.
- Is it unto this place, a single crease will tumble prismic walls.
- Is it unto this place, a sheath is made of black mica, and a pocket weight, of polished rose quartz.
- Is it unto this place, the hobbyist should starve for want.
- Is it unto this place, that we should dry the clothes like old vegetable.
- Is it unto this place, the simple power of singular demanding.
- Is it unto this place, the tired skin that feeds the something, making new.
- Is it unto this place, to harness broadly disarray.
- Is it unto this place, the lumping master, missing.
- Is it unto this place, resolution comes, resolving, quietly, and on a ring around a post, caressing in a tiny distance, round about a size.

In the words
a brightness

bk. a veil
dakru- / draku-

wall upon
which

a lantern

throws a 1st
gold & bright

net of
the 1st

Coming of summer

eayren
fast thickets

luna: mad ommata

To eye's
side slips
first flower

bunch of orchids
Lay it by

thumos

or time, plan

to throw it on hearth
(*'focus'*)

when the time
'comes'

To generate whole mess halls of feasting children
some as skinny as straw and others as fat as hams

to activate the body as bullpen between the real death
shivering like a sweat bead on a forehead and the throbbing dog's vein

like the fissure through an eastern cliff of this, the broadest caldera lake
bluer than sky

Much is bluer than sky these days gnawing on giblets,
made felicitous invitee to the mess hall of esurience
where children make children more, of dewy foreheads

since the feast at this summer holiday venue is prolonged
by the tremors deep in a crust below where rhododendrons,

invasive cosmos, and a gash of poppies scabble for position
clumped aggressively about this hilly rise, seeming to feed
off of a hole in the earth like an eye socket

I say real death shivering
because groves are emerging which
jackdaws begin pecking at;
I say dog's vein throbbing

since it pants at me sat turned from the cliffs
and the glower of minerals eked into dendrites,
salivates for the venue of metabolism

He sees in the skinny, straw, and in the fat, hocks of ham,
but he is never on holiday.
Rather, vigilantly loyal. But, he cannot be generative since
he pants rather than sweats.

View from an aeroplane

They march beneath you like
grey sedition. They have you in their sights.
Good enough for now. Ice then trench foot.
There are no trees. A hand erupts, to clasp the easterlies.
If for years, then ice caps for millennia. An exact stratospheric
laugh at the Aurora Borealis and then the nudge
design for funeral flotillas, for when the time comes.
Stretch marks from pregnancy, or,
by this time, the entire surface of the skin
bloated by a flu mutated. The mask of swimming for days,
by then, a bridge. A port called 'one another'. Port side, barnacled wall.
The hand dabbles. It will require a burgeoning port population
to rescue the corporation, and ultimately itself,
from a smudge history.

Jean Arp, Mar. 1960

Enter the grand universe of night fading
from twilight, born of imagination, awaken
when the cock strikes up his chant, the
cast-off shelfmonsters of Louise Nevelson
walk.

Here are Greeks (Greek Land)
—land of boards swept to shelves
where hope vanishes right out
devastating you.

Here are plain complaints of air
a wandering vast library
a muscular cocoon
a continuous flood of shade
a stack of managed criminal cases.

To awaken as if the flap of dawn,
set against eastern ruins
with honor, its rushing mass, your burial.
At such gates how many of us find ourselves
(the inner gates) passing for an entrance of sorts
such noble beings, such notable individualities.

When else does a drunken bottle elicit
sense of catacomb dust?

The boy-with-the-bags (the wedding chest)
juggles bras, he is despondent looking for the cathedral.
Louise Nevelson is one free motherfucker troubles flee from
for instance, Kurt Schwitters.

My real life my love begins
wreath more becoming
no book knowing sets right
bringing the closet onto the stage
poor, poor thing all alone
failing in every which way
more like the idea of a house
of suspicion, no? "I fight
for the users" in a room
with no doors "I love you
because you are not me"
a career pursuing the night
likely sexual as not an easy time
registering fauna of harmony beyond belief
Art is art
as though the world yet turned
on a name learned of a new kind
tell the moon to go to hell
I refuse apologize
no dramatic monologue "performative" as any
more than less, create islands
that breathe mountains which speak
a room with no doors
sanity runs from

the language of the body is green
the language of the intellect is blue
the language of the dream is red
the language of fact is transparent

- 1.0 The boat was shaped like a seed.
This seed eventually became a lung.
As we rowed a large transparent face appeared in front of us.
There were known to be three fish in the ocean.
Known by who?
This face, it was gray.
No matter where we turned, we rowed toward it.
- 1.1 A voice told us
the four directions of this dream
are the dream itself.
- So speech walks right
out of space and into our mouths?
Yes and no.
Have you considered

the critical role of the tribal chemical?

Yes and no.
- 1.2 Each leaf
in the center of its own dream
can ask a question.
As we rowed we became a story.
Overhead the bank of clouds, inside of which
wind and electricity make a voice.
Below, the first follower,
the oars' draw toward the boiling moon.
In truth, life is scattered everywhere,
- 1.3 throw a stick into water
and see where it goes.
A spider begins to work in the shallow riffles of the dream.
- 1.4 It will build a new web every day.
Wall Street will be watching closely.
Let us always return to the question:
Are we here right now?
- 1.5 Nothing that lives is as fast as a dream.
Second is a bird;
A bird has no ear lobes sticking out of its head.
A bird almost flies into dream.

- 1.6 These thoughts, their nest is themselves.
 Sleeping in earth language, the male suddenly changes color.
 As if ripe.
 Atoms, it is determined, are fanciful.
- 1.7 Plants can do one thing
 we cannot do.
 We see the moon walking a cloud.
 We see the terrible jaw.
 Our boat bears us toward our breathing.
 Its wake pulses.
- 1.8 On land we build a little house of fire.
 Thought-eating man appears, with
 his basket of daylight that never empties.
 During off hours, birds sleep in
- 1.9 earth language or sing in words
 from nowhere, a circle from bird
 to bird, a line of bird sound
 from dreams into dreams
 where the light from each bird's face
 beams language.
- Another sound escapes
 from a plant's dream, becomes a
 thought on the flat earth,
 a shape to sleep toward,
 another circle.
- 2.0 These plants prey on being.
 White daylight flies from them
 in six directions.
 If you eat them you are one direction.
 We are having an earth adventure.
- 2.1 Then wingless birds assumed the role of giraffes.
 Music walks over the shining land.
- 2.2 Is the snake asleep?
 The snake has no eyelids. We can't tell.
 One plant is an audience for night miracles.
 The sting of its air in our lungs
 turns us back into nothing,
 then back again
 and that's breath.
- Let's invent a bell, a map and time.
Then what?
 No listeners, only breathing.
 Let's ask the name of each thought.
Ask who?
- 2.3 We want to do our homework but

- we don't know what homework is.
- 2.4 An act of calm around the body
a plant heaviness
that's language settling in.
- 2.5 Now we have a blade
hear the new sound of air
a dark and straight space to think
we are going to love counting
it's so private
a berry pushes itself into being
let's grow another hand for it
let's grow a helmet
we are getting so thirsty
why do we evolve away from grace?
- 2.6 Where is this dream going?
Now there are eight directions.
Each direction has hands.
Thought-eating man has
- 2.7 outgrown his brain.
He wants more facts.
- 2.8 Despite interactive mind distribution
it is determined that different people
have different bodies.
- Despite too many walkers drumming
on the earth, a rhythm surfaces.
- 2.8 The face, full of light,
passes over.
Its facts sweep into the sea.
Keep rowing.
The face casts a spell of emergence
over the flat water.
Do we feel like
- 2.9 the first ghosts?
Our language dissolves or seeps into earth.
We think we will just become
a hot nectar and lie around.
From one world to another,
always clinging.
Each leaf asks.
- 3.0 We count them as they kiss,
we ride in our boat of breath toward the moon.
We are strangers after all.
A gray area of sleep surrounds the face.
Are we here?

from *Symphony no. 7*
(detached resonating hour)

38

There is no attempt
to defy
the icy edgeless night's approach
or the prescient isolation
in another's eyes
facing the penumbral shadow's
onslaught of death
there is no attempt
to shatter
a glass-philosophy's
lesioned view through eclipsed eyelids
or to explain the apocalyptic ghosts
melting on the descending stairwell's
iron and steel rail
there is no attempt
to decipher
the dark formless plastic faces
existing within an ill-defined reality's grasp
or a room where crows glare
through gaping serrated holes
onto an ocean of grassblades
and cold stone dimensional gods
there is no attempt
to quench
the updraft of promethean conflagration
where flailing ember limbs
throw themselves
from the amethyst temple's crumbling spire
and where the bleary vagrant's psychotic rage
fills the sodden fields with howling wolves
and dying nightingale cries

Worrying gurgle from the maritime wiggler.
Dog bouillon saved the life of Captain Cook.
I know how to bark. What does a goose know
about stopping the rain? Smooth sailing on
the Sea of Marmara. At the risk of being dead,
the Viking relied on his sun stone for guidance.
My facilitator travels with me. My answerer
does the heavy lifting. Crowned in angelica,
keeping company with the moon. A sphere
in yew. Chartreuse ball. Who's the author
of this sharp color? Translating Assyrian and
dreaming of a post with the British Museum.
*Desirous of mastering the seventy-two languages
created at the confusion of Babel.* We're all students
at this university. *Better to build schoolrooms for the
child than prisons for the adult.* From classical to
quantum, cubit to qubit. The structures change,
the suffering remains the same.

I raced against the wind
And beat my head off the trees
Asking them the questions
No god could ever answer me
So I create the self inside a membrane
Ascension into Kether
A crown of daggers
A crowd full of the nameless
Embraced winter's rotten teeth
Coddling their favorite son
The number Eleven I claim
Language and time creates nothing
But illusions made for excuses and insolence.
No time, Only Love, Selfless Creation
No reasons, Only Existence, Ascension
Tetragrammaton, Mystifying, Baphomet

Interview

With Peter O'Leary

The inner world
of my habitual focus is incompletely
holy. How will the lamp I shine within illuminate

the light I don't yet know?

—"Spiritual Autobiography"

Jamie & Jeff: Your bio in *Luminous Epinoia* says "Vocations to poetry and religion have committed [you] to the pursuit of what St. Bonaventure named a[...] journey of the mind to God, with particular attention devoted to the mystagogical-initiatic and the mytho-poetical." What is your spiritual background? How did you come to poetry? Where did you initially find their connecting points?

Peter O'Leary: I was raised in a Catholic family on the east side of Detroit, and then in Grosse Pointe Park, a suburb on Lake St. Clair. We belonged to the parish of St. Clare of Montefalco. This was the heyday of John XXIII's *aggiornamento*, the windows to the Church flung wide open. Besides the pastor, there were several associate pastors and priests; for a period, there were two masses celebrated at 9 a.m. alone, there were so many people attending. One in the church and another in its basement: the folk mass. That's the one we attended—there was a band that played: bass, drumkit, guitars. The Great Amen is part of my soul. My folks were active in the parish: as lectors and volunteers. I went to public grade school and middle school, then on to a Catholic high school. But even the kids in public school identified themselves by which parish they belonged to. (St. Clare or St. Ambrose.)

Despite a long-standing engagement with Buddhism and Buddhist meditation practices and a serious intoxication with Orthodox Christian mysticism, I remain Catholic. Not in the background. This means I believe in the core tenets: God the generative creator; Christ the son crucified; the Holy Spirit proceeding from these; the resurrection of the body, the life in the world to come. This means I adhere to the trifold mythical pattern of creation, resurrection, and apocalypse. What is signified when I say such things? In poetry terms, it's essentially opaque. (Or bewildering, to use a term favored by Fanny Howe.) In practical terms, it means I do things like go to mass, observe Lenten privations, serve on my kids' school board, go to fish fries, and just as my parents did, serve as a lector at mass.

Of the resurrection, Olivier Messiaen has said, "Here... we're dealing with a crucial moment in the history of the world, the most important moment since the Creation. Unlike some people, I don't see the Resurrection as an effort made by Christ: it's something he underwent, like an atom bomb exploding." This sense of Christ's radiating resurrective energy creation was concentrated into is consonant in my mind with the prophetic energy Shi'ite Muslims believe to be pulsating from the Mahdi, the hidden imam obscured in the realm of occultation but whose prophetic insight continues to infuse and be felt in this world. And consonant with Isaac Luria's understanding of *zimzum*, the withdrawal of God from God-self at the moment of intensest creation—repulsed from the center of the self such that an overwhelming, compensatory energy flowed spontaneously into creation, shattering its cosmic structure from the outset. All three of these conceptualizations work as analogies for language in poetry: aura, influence, radiating energy, catastrophe, anticipation, rebirth.

The crucial moment in the history of my own creative world was in the early 1990s. I had just begun my studies at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago where I planned to work on Robert Duncan's poetry, with which I was deeply enamored (and remain so). Meanwhile, I was involved in a profoundly meaningful correspondence with Ronald Johnson, who had begun to teach me how to write poetry, helping me to shape inchoate passions into form, following his invented "Marie Curie dictum" of "compression & radiation." These began to surge through their direct contact with the materials I was

encountering in the courses of two of my professors: the history of Christian mysticism with the great Bernard McGinn; and depth psychology, especially Freud's, with Peter Homans, who was an impossibly thoughtful and gentle man whom I admired outrageously. A potent brew, all this.

Add emotional chaos – unspectacular in the wide view but intense and catastrophic at the time. I had begun to listen to the music of Arvo Pärt on the advice of a friend. His composition "Passio," which is his setting of the Passion according to Saint John, and "Te Deum," which is his setting of the Latin hymn "Te Deum laudamus," "Thee, O God, we praise," traditionally attributed to Sts. Ambrose and Augustine. Some quality of sacred consciousness shifted in me when I heard these pieces of music. Rather than dramatizing spiritual striving and torment, they suggested the horizontality of the sacred itself, something of what Rudolf Otto discerned in the *mysterium tremendum*, inspiring him to coin the word "numinous." I became fixated on attending to this horizontal application of the sacred in my writing: how to attain it? I was learning how to manipulate language at the level of sound and meaning thanks to Ronald Johnson. (And that definition of poetry – "the manipulation of language at the level of sound and meaning" – is Devin Johnston's. He wrote it to me in an e-mail once!)

During a vacation to Greece the summer after my first year of graduate school, I effectively stumbled upon Orthodox spirituality and tradition, something that had been entirely eclipsed from my point of view up til then. It was revelatory: seeing an old church in the countryside of the island of Naxos, a thousand years old, looking like a wasps' nest set in a field of thyme, a fresco of the living Pantocrator painted onto the cracked dome, and scattered people worshiping in there. From that moment, more or less, I immersed myself in Orthodox Christian history and mysticism for a decade, continuing repeatedly to dip myself in that well. And my first book, *Watchfulness*, emerged entirely from this immersion. You cited my invocation of St. Bonaventure in your question. It's meant, maybe obviously, as a provocation as well. When I read a poet's biographical note, I like to find out something about that person besides the boilerplate of what he or she has published and where he or she teaches or some kind of hipster validation or factoid. I included that notion of St. Bonaventure's because I like the idea of asking what it means nowadays to try to attempt a journey of the mind to God.

(To be continued...)

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The contributors to this issue: we are in awe.

And Seamus.

Alhamdulillah

Biographies | Credits

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(page 10) LUCY BURNETT is a poet and historian from the woods of Whidbey Island. Her love of alternative learning recently uprooted her from Washington State to Washington DC, where she directs Knowledge Commons DC, a free community school.

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(pages 12, 13) BROOKS LAMPE teaches rhetoric, composition and poetry. His blog, Uut Poetry (uutpoetry.tumblr.com), explores the intersection of surrealism, postmodernism, experimental poetics and technology. He has several experimental Twitter projects including @Microdream. Currently, he is dissertating at the Catholic University of American in Washington D.C. on surrealism in contemporary American poetry.

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(pages 21, 22) COREY WAKELING's poetry and reviews appear in numerous Australian and international journals and anthologies, with new work appearing in *The Black Rider*, *Handsome Journal*, *Jacket2*, *Southerly*, *Famous Reporter*, *E-ratio*, *foam:e*, *Best Australian Poems 2011*, and *Overland*. He is a PhD candidate and tutor at the University of Melbourne, and reviews editor of poetry journal *Rabbit*. A chapbook appears with Vagabond Press this year

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