

THE SIGH PRESS

ISSUE 10 • AUTUMN 2016

NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

We're happy that we are no longer sticking to our chairs and work surfaces—maybe you're happy that you aren't either—and that autumn is in the air.

Francesco Duffy-Boscagli is our featured artist this fall. We think you'll delight in his daily drawings throughout the issue, alongside visually evocative writing by Luke Whittington, Isabella Ronchetti, and Volodymyr Kuzma. And the writer of our Cultural Commentary, after a stint in the US this summer, tackles some disorienting aspects of that culture.

Remember to visit our website, thesighpress.com where our Ampersand interview series continues to grow: you'll find interviews with Laura Fraser and Lee Foust and you can expect our next interview later this fall with Irish writer Paula McGrath. Also, our Podcast page, "Quotes," now includes a new recording of the Spring 2016 story *The Vain Elephant and the Parrot Evaristo* by John Gerard Sapodilla and JJ Piglet. And you'll find our Winter Issue 2016 theme and deadline.

Several times a week, we post all kinds of interesting things on our Facebook page; we hope you'll have a look.

Lyll Harris & Mundy Walsh

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from 642 Drawings

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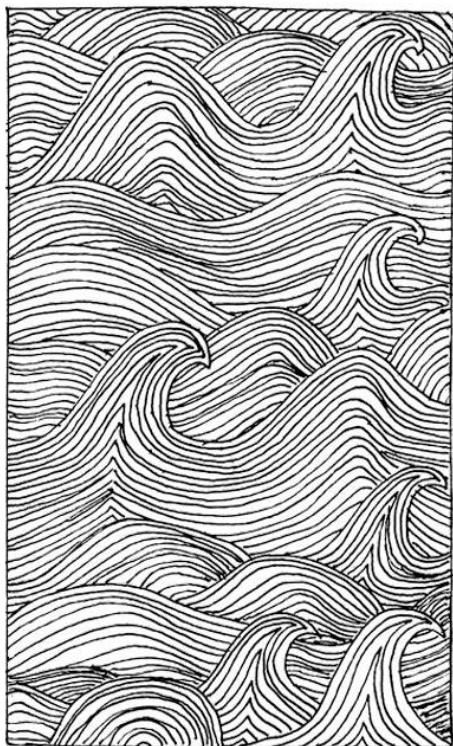
QUESTION MARK

The Sigh Press



WAVES

FRANCESCO DUFFY-BOSCAGLI



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DUST AND TIME

LUKE WHITINGTON



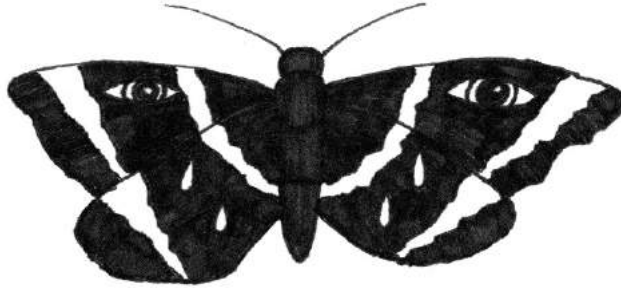
You stare into boredom
Like an art form
A window
On monotony.

This is not like gazing at lint
Or dust descending
In a space of minutes
In air made golden —
That is focus.

This is becoming utterly
Insignificant, watching nothing much
Happen — it is as if the dust
Actually watched you — the lint
Descended to get a better
Look at your paralysis.

These tiny specks
Will continue to descend
After the human they examined
Is spent and buried — after you are cleared
From the shelf;

“Remember me” — you whisper
But the dust does not listen.



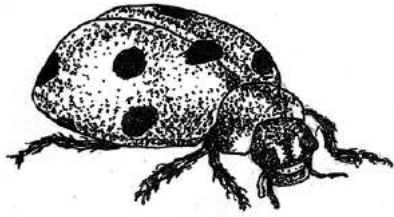
APHORISMS

VOLODYMYR KUZMA

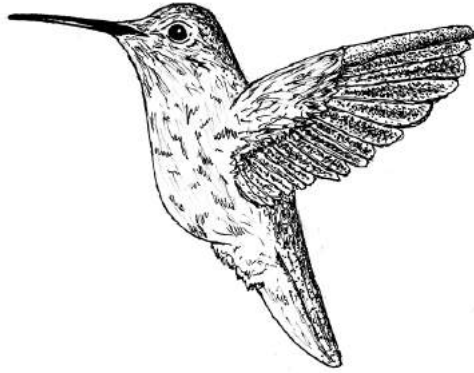
AND THERE I WAS AND THERE YOU WERE AND THE SILENCE WAS SITTING
BETWEEN US TRYING TO MAKE SOME CONVERSATION.



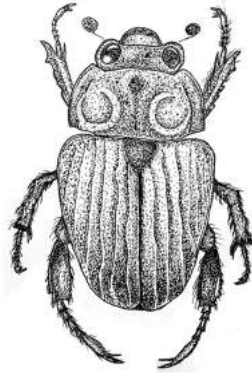
I DON'T JUDGE! I JUST MAKE INAPPROPRIATE COMMENTS.



FROM THE BIBLE: "WHERE THE HOLY SPIRIT IS, THERE IS FREEDOM."
DOES ANYBODY HAVE THE MAP OF THE COVERAGE FOR THIS SERVICE?



THE ONLY BAD THING IN HAVING AN ITALIAN MUSE WORKING FOR YOU
IS THAT SHE IS ALWAYS LATE!



I KNOW I AM NO GOOD WITH PEOPLE AND I KNOW YOU AREN'T EITHER...

SO WE'LL KEEP IN TOUCH, SHALL WE?



YOU ARE BECOMING SUCH A MAGICAL MEMORY FOR ME! NOW, WHY ARE YOU
TRYING TO RUIN IT WITH YOUR PRESENCE?

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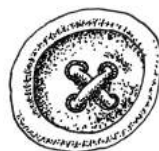
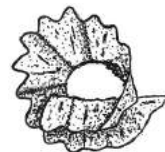
FLOATING WORLD

ISABELLA RONCHETTI



When I awake my pillows are sodden and water is seeping up through the mattress, licking my polka-dotted sheet and yellow cotton socks. I look at the cracks in the ceiling, so near I could probably reach up and touch them with a raisin-finger if I tried. The wrinkled sun frowns through the skylight, a little closer than it used to be. Propping myself up on both elbows, I find an empty spool of thread tangled in my sheet and many more floating around me amongst picture-book pages and my wilted herb garden. The desk and the mirror and the lamp and the chair swim around my bed, too, as it glides to the middle of the small room then stops, and just...*is*. Afloat, with me still on top, it barely moves in a golden pool, light shining up from my submerged window below, ajar, though the level of the water remains the same. The tinfoil crown I made in kindergarten

surfaces next to a buoyant bedside table. When was the last time I saw that crown? My feet are cold. A checkered fish brushes up against my bare leg, which now is immersed; he must have come in through that unlatched window. I can hear the sputtering and the gurgling of my drowning red telephone as you call me. And bubbles rise as it rings and rings; I dive down to answer. I see the floating rug above me, more fishes dancing past. And algae have grown along the walls and in the cracks of the wooden floor. The window is open all the way now, water-jasmines and drowning roses peaking in. By the time I reach the receiver the phone is floating up, up, dead. When I surface it's dark and the ceiling is mere inches away. I don't see the sun anymore; it has probably been swallowed, too.



UNIQUELY AMERICAN

(BY ANONYMOUS)



On a recent trip to the US from Tuscany, I found myself falling back on something I did in my twenties but swore off of once I had children. I was back in a gym.

I wasn't getting around the US city I was visiting by walking or biking like I do in Italy and it was just too hot and humid to exercise unless I woke up at 5:30am. So there I was, signing up for an indoor cycling class. How bad could that be? Yet, the class start time alone should have been a warning sign: 1:00pm. Instead of *Butta la pasta!*, I was in a dimly lit and windowless (albeit air-conditioned) room, a room with rows of steel machinery and mats coiled menacingly along a shadowy mirror, a room that hinted more at bodily harm than body building. But before these impressions crystallized, the reason I'd left gyms in the first place whipped back into focus: the music.

As Taylor Swift and Ariana Grande pulsed out of speakers during warm-up, songs urged the group of us stationary cyclists to “Shake it off” (the buff instructor referred to an Oreo cake she’d eaten earlier) and, later, to “Fire it up.” “There’s a pack of wolves after us!” she exclaimed. What with the music blaring and Lady Godiva trying to stimulate our fight or flight instinct, was anyone else having trouble monitoring just how fast their heart was beating?

The teacher would periodically yell, “Keep your eye on that number in the left corner of your bike screen!” (Was that tiny black squiggle a number? It was so dark in there, I could barely see the towel draped over my handlebars—towel that was becoming increasingly necessary for my dripping brow.) “That number is the fat you’re burning!” One of the lyrics went something like, “Some people say I ain’t got no brains.” I was beginning to wonder, about all of us.

Some remote part of me was participating in this class, mostly keen to keep my heart from jumping out of my chest and hurling itself across the darkness, and another part of me (the part suddenly alarmed at the realization we still had 30 minutes to go) was thinking about how uniquely American this was, like Oreos themselves. Or like the parking lot I’d just parked in: anywhere in Italy, that parking lot would be a town’s piazza. But here it is the anti-piazza: a sprawl of blistering asphalt utterly unfriendly to mammals of any kind.

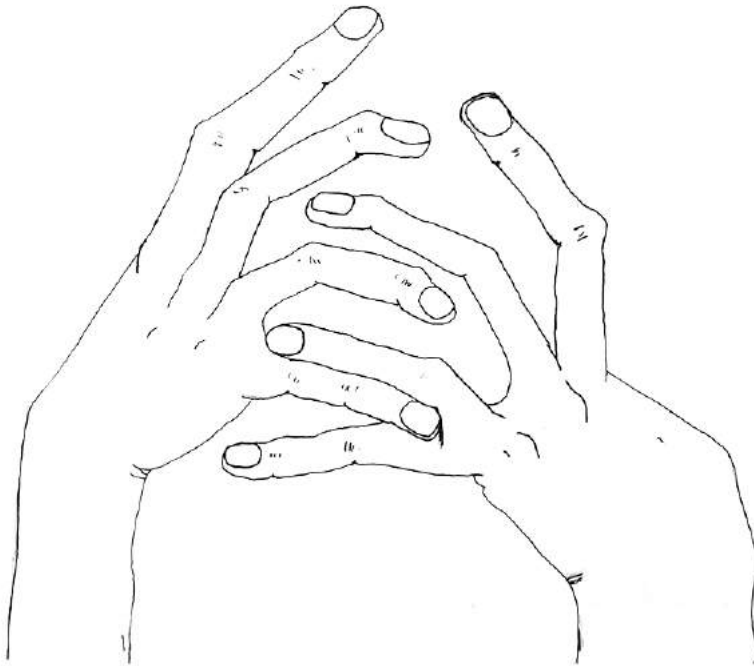
The class at the gym was uniquely American not just like the SUV-clogged lots but like the mega-stores at the edges of those very lots. Mega-stores that make me remember a Carol Burnett skit where Carol and Harvey Korman were actors, famous for a play they did over and over.

One night, Carol and Harvey's characters were invited to perform the play at a huge outdoor theatre where, naturally, the scale was all wrong: after hanging her coat on the rack, Carol's character took forever to traverse the expanse of stage; the sofa was at a great distance from the coffee table, making Carol and Harvey's blocking ridiculous and fabulously comedic; throughout the scene, the pair clomped back and forth awkwardly (hilariously) to engage in insignificant exchanges. In one of America's mega-stores, you're like Carol and Harvey, only it's not funny. You really do have to cover those distances to locate a bra, and back again if you've forgotten to get the garden hose or tomatoes—because all of these disparate items can be found in America's mega-stores.

My cycling class at the gym was uniquely American like the offer the mega-store's clerk made me this morning, to sign up for a store credit card (with an interest rate of 30%), enticing me into a life of mega-debt (tragically common in the US) with the promise of future discounts.

Sometimes it only takes doing something once (more) to know you never need to do it again. Consider my trip to the gym. The lyric I'd just heard while spinning to nowhere said it best: "I've got one less problem without you."

?



How many untold stories live in the hands of an artist?

CONTRIBUTORS

BIOS & TSP QUESTION

TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS: *Tell The Sigh Press what habit you would like to give up, and what new skill would go in its place.*

*

FRANCESCO DUFFY-BOSCAGLI hails from the seaside town of Santa Barbara, California. What he enjoys most in life: laughter, incredibly fine tip pens, and the quiet relief found in the rare moments in which there is nothing to do. With his pens he creates daily drawings that he shares with the world.

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/642_DRAWINGS

WWW.642DRAWINGS.COM

IT IS LENIENCY with myself that is my worst habit. I always allow myself more time than allotted, it is not something I can fall back on. Ever. And you'd think this would be easily learned and then fixed. It is not. It is something that sticks by you, as if the procrastination itself has begun to procrastinate.

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LUKE WHITINGTON left Australia (and a career in diplomacy) to learn Italian at the University for Stranieri in Perugia. He spent 19 years living in Italy restoring old ruined buildings, then did the same in Ireland for nine years

while launching a multi-media centre (Pleasant Factory) in Dublin in the 90s. His work has appeared in publications in Ireland and Australia such as *Post*, *Five Bells*, *Quadrant*, *Overland* and *Contrappasso*, and has been anthologized in *Henry Kendall Prize Anthologies*, *Australian Love Poems 2013*, and *Canberra Poets Anthology 2015*. He participates in public readings of his work, including in Florence, one of the places where he divides his time.

Rather than habits, let things evolve. Habits are for drudgery.

—

VOLODYMYR KUZMA is a Ukrainian-born violinist who has lived and worked in Florence since 2002. Currently he is a Professor at the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole and also gives many concerts in Italy and abroad. His hobbies include composing music and writing, which is usually done during his travels.

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/CHANNEL/UC2-77HVEPOBOKXD5W_VFP9Q](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2-77HVEPOBOKXD5W_VFP9Q)

[HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/VOLODYMYRKUZMAVIOLINIST/](https://www.facebook.com/VOLODYMYRKUZMAVIOLINIST/)

IT'S A TRICKY QUESTION because in my opinion we all change, adapt and evolve constantly so, week to week, I always try to improve myself, shed some bad habits and learn something new.

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ISABELLA RONCHETTI is an artist-writer/misanthrope/sesquipedalianist who intentionally wears mix-matched socks and taught herself to raise one

eyebrow. She finds inspiration in dreams, stories, shapes in the cumuli, and peculiar happenings from everyday life. Her award-winning work has appeared in numerous publications such as *Diverse Voices Quarterly*, *Canvas Literary Journal*, *Foliate Oak Literary Journal*, *GREYstone*, *Glass Kite Anthology*, *Bluefire Journal*, *The Claremont Review*, *Celebrating Art*, and *Poetic Power Anthology*.

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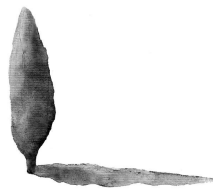
OFTEN WHEN I FEEL ALONE, I climb eight flights of stairs to the roof of a parking lot. I watch people walk by, I watch them go through the boring motions of their day, completely unaware of me up there. I realize, from watching these herds of people who are all the same, unquestioning, that I am stagnant and boring like everyone else. I am trying to change little things throughout my day, trying to make my life a little less predictable. I owe this to my throne on the roof and to all the oblivious passers-by who are living their lives without questioning why they do what they do, but once they figure that out it will probably be too late.

~

ANONYMOUS HAS HAD A RELATIONSHIP with Florence since 1992, often enjoying the secret that she is intimate with the place and culture despite her anonymity in the weighty terra cotta city swarming with tourists.

ANONYMOUS WOULD LIKE to stop mixing Italian and French whenever she tries to speak French, a language she once knew well. This unfortunate habit would be replaced with neat language compartments in her brain

where the French are having their croque monsieurs and the Italians are gesturing over espresso (as only espresso should be made), and never the two shall meet.



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Visit thesighpress.com for details.

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