JORDAN JONES

SELECTIONS FROM "THE WHEEL"
Selections from The Wheel
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Contents

Manifesto 9
Cycle 10
Fingerprints 11
Stonehenge 12
Holy Disc of Quetzalcoatl 14
Cisco 15
Open Fields 17
Sanborn Park 19
The Color of Fireflies 20
Night Grapefruit 21
Rinse Cycle 23
Cool to be Stupid 25
Ball-and-Chain Affair 26
Naked in Babylon 28
El Toro 30
Lima Beans 32
Birds of Iraq 34
Temporary Empire 36
Selections from The Wheel
Thales, the pre-Socratic philosopher, said that “Everything is water,” or he may have said, “Everything comes from water,” “Water delivers all births,” or “Water is the center of all things.” While it’s unclear exactly what he said, as we only have Aristotle’s summary, it’s critical to understand that the planet is tidal and watery by nature.

Whether you write in the sand of an estuary, and allow your work to perish completely submerged, or you search out the mountain forests to do your writing in the wild, words are liquid we pour onto the earth.

Water flows into, over, through, up, down, and around the tallest and the smallest trees of the forest. Mammals live by the tide of blood; the body is a watershed. Write in nature, and nature will erase any attempt at personal immortality.

A day will come when those who walk upright will use symbol languages to create false messages out of sticks, rocks, leaves, feathers, scat, and rubbish. These artworks will decay, blow away, be scavenged by wolves and vultures, and otherwise return to the natural state of the world, that is, revolution, contagion, degradation.
Cycle

It winds up & winds down —

   the sun eats the flesh of the moon,
   the moon makes a dress of the stars.

On earth, we have nothing more

   to take care of than ever —

   Just each other —
   that is enough.
Fingerprints

The whorl of the years in wood,
the whorls on the tips
of our fingers,
are relief maps to where we’ve been /
where we’re going.

Circles bisect circles in the Sawmill.

The State collects our finger whorls
in a dactyloscopy of electrons
circling like carrion birds,

The State & the Sawmill only seem
to stop our history in its tracks /
because the tracks remain —

The State & the Sawmill
will be fossils of little interest,
all straight lines & human planning,
not a biological circle
to be found.
Stonehenge

Circle around circle around horseshoe
   — the star enters the horseshoe’s open mouth,
the gate into the smiling world, a vulva,
slick with morning dew.

To map the sky
   through all its turning cycles,
the arborists carved massive
columns from stone,

& rolled the liths
   over the loamy earth
mile by mile
on hewn trunks of alders.

   The columns aligned
the stars & sun & moon
   in all precision,
the druids learned the great circle
of weather & seasons
opens & closes
  like the bells of four o’clocks.

Without inventing paper & ink,
  mathematics & physics,
no less wise, no less foolish
  than the other inventions,

stands the solid circle
  amid heather & bracken.
Holy Disc of Quetzalcoatl

Among the Aztecs, the wheel & axle
were sacred objects —
the calendar, the earth’s spin
made visible.

Only toy leopards,
with sleek playfulness,
were allowed to roll
the holy disc of Quetzalcoatl.
Cisco

I shuffled 7 years in shoes of forgetfulness, only to awake as from a coma, needing rehab & counseling.

The other sleepwalkers, in various stages of drowse & dream, stubbed their toes, rubbed their eyes.

Some of them grinned at me.

I doubted the shapes of the shadows on the wall, disbelieved the money could do this, unbelieved the fear of no money could do this.

I no longer possessed a language for the body, or a body, just an alimentary canal, feeding & eliminating as necessary for the economy.

I was blind, deaf & in all ways sliced from the art of the daily:
I don’t know who I have been impersonating, except to say, “Myself.”

And so
I began
to be.

19 & 20 October 2002 / 1 December 2002
At twelve, my friends & I ran
    north of town
into fields of grass —
    paper crinkling in the summer heat.

The Frog Pond —
    sheen of oil, repository for the Chrysler
junk heaps of suburbia —
    where we gathered flint & tried
to chip arrowheads
    with blunt force, aching
for the natural life —
    away from apron strings
    & TVs, asphalt & classrooms.

We dreamt of curling up at night
    in a burned out shell of eucalyptus.
Dominic, the Basque shepherd, drove his flock
north from Madera Road out toward Pyramid Hill
& back.

His route is filled with garages,
blocked by the KardKey plant
& the rushing stream of California 118.

We measure our loss

with our memory

of a larger, wheeling world.
Sanborn Park

Pale green leaves underfoot, maroon of madrone, ochre of tanoak on the trail —

hundreds of small, slippery poems the trees address to the leisure of the summer soil
	sneaking our future into wildness —
	the terrain Coyote inhabits, just outside the circular edge of the urban.
In the Disney version of
the South, fireflies
are white
tiny bulbs strung through the trees
in the eternal Christmas
of a southern summer evening.

Today, I saw the real color
of fireflies toward twilight:
white green, nearly transparent,
like the green flash I saw
on ’shrooms in
Eureka.

The color of fireflies
resists attempts to remember it,
& refuses to remain.
Night Grapefruit

The opossum, after the night grapefruit, runs along the brick wall then drops into the yard near the tree of sour meat.

He sucks his fill of pink & pulp.

The motion detector light freezes him in sight of my cat, Natasha.

Each of them, wild & tame — in their own manner — stare into the eyes of the other. They do not move.

Under the dim stars & the brilliant porch light,
under the balcony of wood,
    they sniff & back off,
    return to animal caution —

No human yard
    contains them;
no human wall
    keeps them out.
Rinse Cycle

I watch Audrey Hepburn
burn for David
in “Sabrina,”
as the dishes
rinse in the background.

One of them is naïve,
one worldly. Neither knows
which is which.

By the end of the movie,
they’ve traded
neuroses.

She’s learned
how to make a soufflé.

He’s nearly gotten fired
from the family business.
And she’s dumped him
just as he’s getting
interested,
in order to date his older,
wiser, more sensible brother.

I told you it was a movie.
The dishes are dry.

21 October 2002
Cool to be Stupid

You gotta lean into cool,
it ain’t gonna lean
into you.

You gotta mean what you
mean
while you can.

Slice across the grain
of any snow day. The ages of your life
like rings in a tree,
forget nothing:

days spent sick, watching 30-year-old
re-runs on TV Land,
fllying down the hill on a toboggan
on a weekday....

What the tree rings show is how aware
the tree needed to be.

Sometimes, it’s the quick who are dead.
When she saw what I was packing
how could she refuse?

We were insects in love,
humping like we only had two weeks to live.

A fortnight of bliss,
with a ball-and-chain in my pocket
to show for it. But somehow,
I’m filthy; somehow, I need the censor
to black me out, to hide what
makes my brief span so sweet.

And then they want to build a mall
in the last field any of us know,
saying, “Endangered species!
with a schlong like that
how could they be endangered?"
And the bug zappers go up

in the neighborhood
of punishment.

It’s enough to provoke
an infestation.

This ain’t the last
you’ve seen of *my* ball-and-chain!
Naked in Babylon

“Imagine Mr. Bush, nude, addressing, addressing the State of the Union. Ob, and imagine also Saddam Hussein, nude, addressing his people. Now what? You know.”

— Nadine Gary, Raelian Protester

Naked in peace and war.

Naked at night
 & in the day.

Naked on the battlefield:
 shorn of gas masks and shoulder-launched ordinance; naked of boots & packs.

Lost in the desert naked.

Naked in the dust storms
 of Babylon.

We enter and leave this world
 naked. Naked at first;
naked at last!
Naked Greek wrestlers invented
sport.

Protestants, Jews & Muslims,
ashamed of being naked,
cover up their bodies
like the bodies of the dead —
first in palls & then
under the final handful
of naked earth
they hurl at one another,

& later use to mourn &
take leave of
their own.
El Toro

for A. G.

“The 47th annual El Toro Air Show ended with record-setting crowds of more than 2 million over the weekend who made a final salute to an Orange County tradition that has thrilled spectators over nearly five decades.”
— Los Angeles Times

Stars rip
clouds from the sky
tonight, —

Allen joins Jack
& Neal
in eternity.

Stealth
bombers & Blue Angels no longer
scorch the dusty circus air of El Toro —
the great angry bard flies
to join his Buddha-
body.

Fujimori says we’ve reached
the end of history.
El Toro Air Base goes under padlock.

Allen
on the far shore, watches Charon pole his skiff back
across the black
waters. Paper soldiers in secret
rooms map out the next
terrible war.

27 & 29 April 1997
“If some would like to turn this into class warfare, I, that’s not how I think:
I think about the overall economy.”

— President George W. Bush

The lines for free food in Lima,
Ohio stretch half
around the block.

Just after Christmas, your unemployment
insurance dried out
like the tree you couldn’t afford
but bought anyway.

Standing in line, you imagine
Ken Lay’s mansion.

The greed pyramid
& millions of simple
retirements, like yours,
collapsed and burnt in Manhattan.
When you return home, your t.v.
shows the flashy graphics of Crisis
    in the Gulf, the sequel,
but there’s no class
    warfare in the mind
of the President.
Aren’t you glad?
**Birds of Iraq**

“In the name of peace, if he does not disarm,
I will lead a coalition of the willing to disarm Saddam Hussein.
— President George W. Bush

The President is afraid
that the oil of Saddam
might go up in plumes
& what that will mean for the economy
of the Iraq to come —

So add to the human loss,
the smoke of the oil of wealth
smudging the air of birds.

Who thinks of the sooty falcon,
the rustic bunting, the common babbler,
the ring ouzel, & red-breasted merganser,
& all the other birds of Iraq?

Who thinks of the people of Iraq?
War after war after war....
Iran, Iran, Iran,
US, US, US,
Saddam, Saddam, Saddam:
who thinks of the people of Iraq?

Dead Sea sparrow & dusky thrush,
Black-throated accentor & black francolin,
Brahminy mynah, black stork,
& grey-crowned crane. Pygmy cormorant
meet Levantine sparrowhawk —

all of you will burn in fires
programmed in Kansas,
or, in flight above the burnt earth
of retreat, choke on the sooty remains
of your ancestors from the cretaceous:

misery spreads from person to person,
then into the air of birds,
like a virus in reverse.
Temporary Empire

“92 million Americans will keep, this year, an average of almost $1,100 more of their own money.”
— President George W. Bush

The calculus of tax and spend is not so much math as spin.

Who’s going to keep my $30,000 in debt? The government keeps it for you, don’t fret.
And who’s going to pay for replanting the forests? Let the shade of concrete buildings refresh you.
$200 billion for a pre-emptive war? Don’t worry! The final accounting will appear on your toe tag.

When will the bacchanal collapse in sparks & shattering glass? When will the Huns ride in to gather our waste for food, to survive on what we ’doze into holes in the land?

One day, and it’s doubtless before geological time gets to it, the Statue of Liberty will hold her lamp
slightly above the rising waters;
all the bills will be overdue, all the good faith & credit
of the United States will be on the watery side
of the flood, & the spin will be seen
at last
for what it has been:

The lies that fueled the engine of power.

The temporary Empire:
while it lasted, it was the greatest
party on Earth.
About the Author

Jordan Jones is the author of a book of poems, *Sand & Coal* (Futharc Press, 1993), and was the editor of *Bakunin* (1990–1997), a literary magazine “for the dead Russian anarchist in all of us.” He is currently the editor and publisher of Leaping Dog Press (www.leapingdogpress.com).

He attended the University of Dallas; California State University, Northridge (BA, 1987); L’Université Catholique de l’Ouest (diplôme de langue, 1989); and the University of California, Davis (MA, 1991).


Obscure Publications published his translation of René Daumal’s *Le Contre-Ciel* in two volumes in 2003, which was also the year that he co-edited the online multimedia collaborartive art exhibit, The 365 Project, (http://www.the365project.org). He lives in the San Francisco Bay Area.
This edition is limited to 60 copies.

This is number 6

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