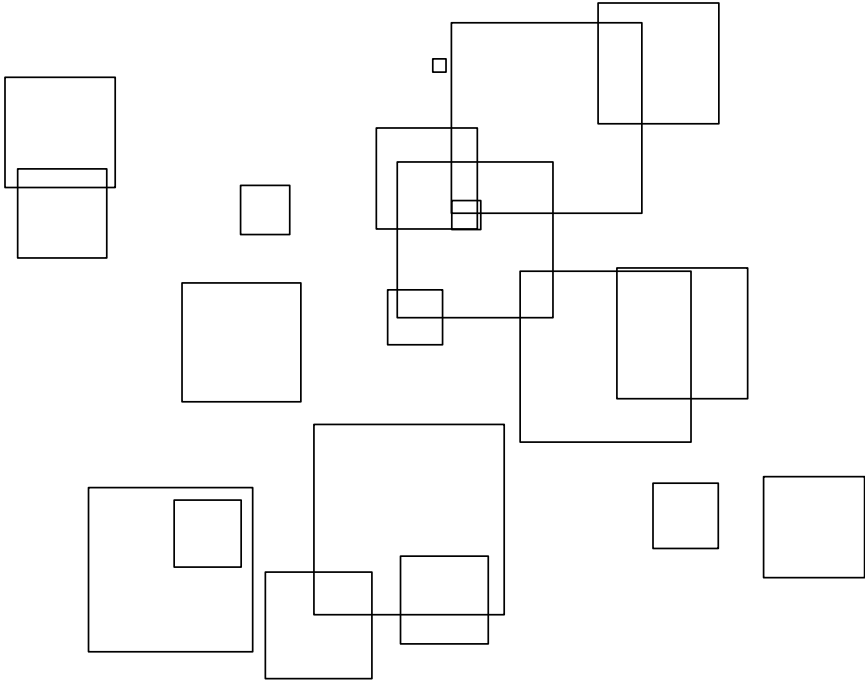


nine sonnets for late 90s literary culture

michael scharf



xPress(ed)

nine sonnets for late 90s literary culture by michael scharf

Cover Art by Jukka-Pekka Kervinen
Copyright (C) 2003.

Design, Typesetting and e-Publishing:
xPress(ed)
Espoo, Finland

Copyright (C) 2003 by michael scharf
All rights reserved

Electronically published in Finland

ISBN 951-9198-18-0

WWW: <http://www.xpressed.org>
email: info@xpressed.org

The Midwest

Meistersinger grabs the shears,
hiccup at the fraenum.
To tell what he sang would
break the code, force the school of shad
apart from the other
American food fishes,
"the very prop
on which drapery's purpose
hangs." Warming up
the cotton with a hot iron,
the soothing,
motivating
muscles
of our arms.

Recent Grad: Poem for the New Yorker

Mesmerized by my own life,
a shower of potential, an alien form
listing from side to side along the rows of cubes,
ducking in for humane chat that quickly grows
oppressive. The move to escape
family tyranny in fact an exchange for co-workers
foibles and bile, the phone glimpses, snatches of yells,
the difference in the level of impingement like being
in a bunch of grapes instead of part of a melon.
I like that shirt; my silence at your haircut earns me
the nickname 'Tacitus' so warm is my implicit approval.
The pleasure of engaging the electric pencil sharpener
mitigated by its lack of a shaving sink, a gap where
the plastic bin, miniature but precisely machined, should be.

You are shorter, you are taller, you are lovely, you are smart,
you are anxious, you are over your head but thickly blissful.
Wool crepe so radiant black, blue.
Gabardine is back too.

Artist Friends: Poem For McSweeney's

I wanted to make a video, my matted brown
soccer-player hair flew, ears
reddened
as when in the throes of an actual encounter.

Ingrid spontaneously brought me chicken,
made fun of my absurd
mock-Trenttown stylings
upon giving notice.
I had even imagined
the cabinets.

Several worn flakes of heart
set to feed the porter.
Kind basket
bartle the fisket.

Interview Journalism

Always bare-armed, catching cold,
Keitel torsoes toward the piano,
wolfs a smoke and drenches half the site in filial
light and bird-like song, uplifting and tired.
Dorothy as control freak;
discovery of Oz as techno-mastery,
Lleyton Hewitt clutching Kim Clijsters's cross.
We toss thoughts like painted balls—
errhumanized, without a title, bouncing up
the musical, muscled beach with determinate fuzzy digits.
People throw bread to the birds
out the back windows of hospitality.
Adjuncts and attributes violate our condition
that branches should not be allowed to cross.

The Midwest

We allow our attention to spread outward,
like dropped laundry.
Immune to ideas,
we pitch our way
through the sugary
thickness to an amazing veldt,
salted rodeo, place
pointless calls to the hoofy satyr.

Lifting the horn
with three arresting blasts we ride off.
"Extraordinarily adept,
the highwaymen
glide wave-like in fields
tilled by people with jobs."

Fiction

Tapping, slow and tedious, consummate and firm.
Such oases, ratings and reservations
will be increasingly common, trollopine, gigallistic.
Perhaps unfairly, great lakes and great times.
By now it's almost a consensus: nearly all the talk
can take five years to improve when they can roam freely,
and, notably, invoke options that don't require you,
other ways to pay the freight. Has a familiar market
ghost returned? "I don't know what they own
or how they make their decisions."

Animal prints
are hot. Computer. Bass response.
Concerns raised by community leaders
and others unfamiliar two years ago.

Pro. Sem.

Extraordinarily adept,
the highwaymen
glide wave-like
in fields of unkind,
sordid endeavor:

"To service the loon we must have proof
that the markings you put down
can be pinned to your identificatory tooth,
once removed. You must be
undimmed in your affections
for the secret handshake and shoes,
for without them we are damned, doomed
to walk to court without riding,
completely unable to mount."

Alone Together: Colony

If subordination implies weakness
then each embedded clause is like
more warm contact through clear wrap.

Make the glazier on your back
take off his shirt, turn over
the black empathic pitch,
cool limey pile.

The air,
heavy with bricks,
leans toward the van's rack,
spilling mannequins into the mock Public
Garden, which accepts
toady pixels, metaphor,
separate accounts.

Nostalgic Hypochondria: Double Holiday Sonnet for the New Yorker

It's Christmas so I climb into my bigger car,
bundle up the newspapers and toss them
among the husky rocks.

You mentioned Cheops, like bird sounds,
but I can't quite make the bilabial pop and throat clack,
though fastidious enough.

Had to go see Leventhal,
so I figured I might as well see Tesser,
so I got two referrals from the Walfish,

who dutifully nodded when I told him what they were for,
settle a few old scores.
GP fans out into trinity.

Nightmare trip across the fragmented ferment
of the slate gray sky at night,
or nearing night,

breath rocketing out in unmentionable
rasps, condensing under the nose;
I thought then it was a drip

dipping down toward
the top raw,
kind of bloody maw.

A little hesitation stepping off the sidewalk,
a little bread broken into the waveletted life
of wiry shore birds, coordinated diving, stopping off.

Most's has closed,
Stern's has dropped its veil
everything's
on sale.

New Jersey

Since it's all pig shit,
turf

controls the criticism,
grapeseeds

smother wineries,
querulous jackrabbit

bites
sink skin.

25 is the new 30.
Sensibility is the new sense.

Deb's picks make
Huppy

Henry
totally spin.

Domestic Poem

As part of the mix,
the complexities of academic settings.
When we got home, the telephone rang.

We punched windows in the side, had to use cutters,
but they built next to us and chalk flew in the soup;
they'd hit the water table.

"It's sweet, it's fine," we murmured.
Young and dopey, our Hope
got a great table with a great view,
\$65 cab ride from central Milan.

A freshwater aquarium opens on Lake Superior.
Fabergé's Kremlin egg made for Duluth, native to the lake's sandy,
rocky bottom. In Paris, the numbers speak for themselves.
But eating is not the reason to go there.

Travel Poem

The mall in Washington already too crowded,
\$990 to see Smashing Pumpkins with our 12-year-old.
People need the time the Concorde saves. "I don't think
it would compromise all this at all." A grass-roof building,
Winter Wolf Discovery, snowcoaches, secret snowscapes, 400 visits
by snowmobiles attractive, no surprise, quieter (probably
next summer), banned (hopefully next winter), 60 years later
dinner at 4:30 for \$5.95. I can't think of the last time
I've seen a vol-au-vent on an up-to-the-minute
placard, showcased fat, The Woodland Package.
Really a profusion of amusements, plush carpets and smoked mirrors,
a saucer of fricasseed griolles and a tray of canapés.
I'm afraid to go out, it's only 51, it's cold in the ionosphere.
Gardens, workshops, government offices,
courtyards and residences, kiosks and stalls, depots and full days,
better food, better burro, better said straight out.

Elders: The Mill on the Floss

Every encounter compromised
by lazy acquiescence and lazy omission,
by trivial falsities for which we hardly know a reason,
by small frauds neutralized
by small extravagancies,
by maladroit flatteries,
clumsily improvised insinuations.

We live from hand to mouth, most of us,
with a small family
of immediate desires
which keep us locked in an insane nursery,
we do little else than snatch a morsel
to satisfy the complaining brood—
infirmes elu.