



LIFECOACH 2

TEXT

Nate Nelson

[COVER DESIGN]

Marianne Morris

LITTLE RABBIT AND THE ARGENTINE

DOCTOR, THE LUTEAL PHASE, LATIN AMERICAN HAIKU

• a Londoner, poet, and wage labourer, born in Toronto in 1981. Her most recent chapbook, *A New Book From Barque Press, Which They Will Probably Not Print*, was published by Barque Press in 2006. She started Bad Press in 2002, where she is now an editor with Jow Lindsay and Jonathan Stevenson.

Chi Fu

COLD SPOON CURARE PITCHES WILD

Joe Russo

from BIRDMAN

ZK

CONGRATULATIONS, THE PURIFIED COMMODITY

- a. (former) distribution manager for *LIFECOACH*.
 - b. often composer for King Crab, Inc
 - c. staff writer/collager/cultural critic
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 - and
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Ryan Dobran

CRYSTAL DECK, EXIT INTERVIEW, GRADIENT

DELUXE, WITH A BLACK HANDLE, A NOTE ON MOUTHUS

• occasionally edits *LIFECOACH*. He lives in Brooklyn, NY.

Michael Stone-Richards MAURICE BLANCHOT, AUTOMATISM I

• teaches critical theory and literature at the College for Creative Studies, Detroit. He is completing a volume of poems entitled *Thresholds*. His work involves translation from the French (Broda, Banequart, Roumain, Belance, Nancy), and a work in progress translating the hermetic poetry of André Breton (*Le Revolver a chevaux blancs* and "Il y aura une fois"). In Fall 2008 his study, *Theresa Hak Kyung Cha: Three Commentaries*, will be published.

Julien Lenoir

AUTOMATISM I

• translator and critic (Prynne, Gustave Roud, Blanchot), wanders between the 4th and 7th arrondissements of Paris. When he enters a classroom it is to reflect on the exigencies of the romance, the narrative (or recit) of sensibility from the Bildungsroman to the afterlife of post-Symbolist traces.

Francoise Le Brun

AUTOMATISM I

• translator and collector of proverbs. She lives in New York.

SOUND

The Occidentals

• staff 'incidental' music ensemble here with live conduction by August Winds

STADIUM CONJUGAL

Mouthus

• Contact: ourmouthrecords.com, mouthus@gmail.com

TRUCKS, GLASS

King Crab

• Contact: kingcrabmusic@gmail.com

THROAT, DOSE

ZK

• c.f. ←

EXPERIMENT IN SQUID

Jersey Flesh

BLENDGLAS

"I saw their starv'd tips in the loam
With torpor warning gap wide,
And I awoke, and found me here
On the wold fill side."

Padna

DEATH OMELET, HOUSEHOLD GODS

• a struggling ex-teenager, Nat Hawks makes solo music as Padna through his Brooklyn homegrown label *little fury things* (www.littlefurythings.net). If you have interest, he's got a gnarly new full-length out that is sorely pleasing.

SEVERABLE TRACK LIST

- | | |
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| [1] The Occidentals | Stadium Conjugal |
| [2] Mouthus | Trucks |
| [3] King Crab | Throat |
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MAURICE BLANCHOT¹



Fig. Ben Frank Moss, *Reverie Closing No. 10*, oil, 2000

¹ Brooklyn, New York, Saturday 30 July 2005.

I can remember the very moment that I first read Maurice Blanchot. Living in York, looking after my three year old first daughter, Sophie-Thérèse, I had just, in October 1993, finished my doctorate at the Courtauld Institute, London with only the Conclusion to write. A second daughter, Felicity Marie, had not long arrived, and I had been called to an interview at an American university in Boston which required that I should at least have submitted my "dissertation." Still, with only the Conclusion to write, Malcolm Bowie, one of my two examiners, had said that for a document of near five hundred pages I should be able to bring myself to write more than a couple of pages in conclusion. At the time I was still marveling at Julien Gracq's *André Breton* (1947), above all the stunning chapter "D'une certaine manière de poser la voix," both for its lesson in mimetic transferal - Gracq made his point about the distinctive role of syntax in Breton's prose by reproducing the play of that syntax, at the same time giving a lesson about imitation in the formation of a culture - as well for the approach which it opened, an approach that saw in Breton less a matter of doctrine than a mode of attending. Hence Gracq's manner of listening to the style of Breton, the richness of Breton's movement eliciting the fine ear disposed to a voluptuousness of texture that is Gracq's. This is something for which my studies with J.H. Prynne had prepared me. For the two years immediately before beginning my graduate studies at the Courtauld in 1987, I had attended every public lecture given by Prynne in Cambridge, and came away, slowed down in my ambitions, with a clear poetics, a key aspect of which is that art is the experience of attention; indeed, I noted the maxim, "Freedom consists in minute acts of attention." Modernist art, I learned from Prynne, was entirely a matter of attention. (Later I would discover this in Celan - whom I was already reading - and Weil who was a name around which I circled until falling in one day - would come to realize that it was implicit in Husserl's form of phenomenology, and would quickly realize that much of modern dance - from, say, Cunningham through Judson (Trisha Brown, above all) to Anne-Teresa de Keersmaeker - could scarce make any sense apart from the experience of the movement of attention.) I decided, though, amidst the varying calls upon attention - which

means somewhat more than the sentence of falling deadlines - to follow up a reference to "Réflexions sur le surréalisme" by Maurice Blanchot. There was not, I recall, any special recommendation accompanying this reference. It was simply a reference on a subject to which I aspired to have a complete knowledge. (My reading habit, since late adolescence, had always been, the moment that a writer interested me - and at that time I did not distinguish between writer, philosopher, poet, a writer was simply someone whose language was worthy of attention - was to acquire something close to the *oeuvres complètes* of that author.) I recall retrieving from the Senate House Library of the University of London a copy of the book *La Part du feu* by Blanchot which contained "Réflexions sur le surréalisme." Given what Blanchot came to mean for me, for my sense of what poetic experience might be, something for which the poetry and presence of Prynne had been my initiation, what strikes me now, has done for some years, indeed, was how slow and, curiously, how indirect was the impact upon me of the work of Blanchot. I read the essay, not with a sense of revelation, since not only was there in it nothing, not a word, not a sentiment with which I disagreed - in other words, there was no passion, since assent was implicit - but almost, *Bon, d'accord. C'est bien ça*. I did, however, notice, as though noticing for the first time something which had been there all along, as though indifferent to any one's presence, the *table of contents*: readings (*lectures*) of Kafka, Mallarmé, Char, "La parole «sacrée» de Hölderlin," "L'échec de Baudelaire," Rimbaud, Lautréamont, Pascal, Valéry, Nietzsche and, to close, "La littérature et le droit à la mort." Noticing the names, every one of which was already a part of my terms of reading, I started to read each essay: on Char, Mallarmé, l'échec de Baudelaire - my initiation to Modernism, going back to Rilke's *Duino Elegies* read in the beautiful Chatto and Windus bilingual edition translated by Leishmann and Spender, Lawrence's *The Rainbow* and Schönberg as introduced to me by Leonard Bernstein's Harvard lectures the year before I went off to University, made of failure a constitutive aspect of modernist sensibility - I felt a curious sense of familiarity emerging, but above all of rightness: in practical criticism one had learned the habit of

quotation as a means of shewing that the text was being followed, as a means of avoiding the sin of generalization which was usually but the flag under which pre-existing views were inserted (in other words using the text as one might use a person), the means by which pomposities about *Art* could pass by as though but intimations of greater things to come, which, teasingly, perhaps, never did come. Yet, a text, or rather, a reflexion, a rumination, a thought, sometime, even, a thought experiment by Blanchot – hence the provisional “lecture de...” of which Stanley Cavell would make such characteristic usage – felt no compunction to quote a text as though to prove fidelity, something which I would soon realize that was common to Valéry and Mallarmé – the English poet Peter Riley, I would later recall, once told me of the legend that Prynne, in his English Tripos examination, gained a First without quoting a single work – that is, that there was available a mode of reading whose aim was not the mere semantic explication of this or that text but whose aim instead was to understand the movement of a work and thereby the universe – or world, as the phenomenologist would say – made available through this work. Reading Blanchot brought out in me a certain kind of sensation which I only received typically when reading either works of German Romanticism or listening to music: a floating sensation of near colour, an opening of resources of feeling – Proust, clearly had such an effect, too – as though another kind of syntax was being sought, a syntax of effort, yes, but near to ease – *It might be so, do you not think?* – since no one with integrity could doubt the authenticity of the experience of reading which was being shared with the reader, one which, furthermore, was not demanding assent – the vulgarity of the empiricist mode of reading – but, and here I risk the charge of explaining the obscure with the still more obscure, inviting acknowledgement. What was also striking about these names, and what I was beginning to feel in the reading of Blanchot, was that this was already my universe of modernism, of spirituality – a spirituality of The Book devolved into works – finding its source; and as I acquired the works of Blanchot – récits, romans, reflexions – I finally came to ask myself, not, How is it possible that I had not read this work before? but, How is it possible

that I could not recall having heard this name before since it is not possible that his work was not part of the universe of my friendships? Everywhere I could now see the traces of Blanchot’s thinking, if not always the name – many years later Gerald Bruns of Notre Dame University would inform me that a very fine scholar of French at Indiana University would not be granted tenure simply because his work was on Blanchot, whilst established scholars in the American academy would write whole books on Blanchot’s politics of the interwar years to see if they could find traces of anti-Semitism only to enclose themselves with get-out of jail clauses: No, there is no hard evidence of scandal but there may be some case to answer, after all. Never mind those for whom the test of commitment is but the dream of past commitments on campuses of lazy luxury. (Is it any wonder the Stalinists found liberals such objective allies?)...The reading experience with Blanchot is modernist, without doubt, but it does not deploy any of the evident devices of distancing so beloved of the sixties avant-garde, which is why, I suspect, that Philippe Sollers can scarce abide Blanchot’s work, thinking it too *ontological* and not sufficiently *écriture*; and Sollers may be right in spite of himself, which is not to say that he does not know that he is right – that is not an irony envisaged in any modal logic – for the sub-Russian formalist devices *comme tel* are of no use to Blanchot since, like Surréalisme, like Heidegger, like Freud, he indeed, I should now say more committedly than any Surréaliste, he begins with and pursues to its end the archaic forms of distancing of which first and foremost is the uncanny (which is everything to do with framing) and the presenting of experiences which gently, at first, slip away from concepts in the manner, for example, of the opening sentences of *Thomas l’obscur* (1950): “Thomas s’assit et regarda la mer. Pendant quelque temps il resta immobile, comme s’il était venue là pour suivre les mouvements des autres nageurs et, bien que la brume l’empêchât de voir très loin, il demeura, avec obstination, les yeux fixés sur ces corps qui flottaient difficilement. Puis, une vague plus forte l’ayant touché, il descendit à son tour sur la pente de sable et glissa au milieu des remous qui le submergèrent aussitôt.” This slipping away from concepts – which will be but the setting for the

terms of the arrival of the fantastical, the marvelous and, indeed, the monstrous, but also, eventually, by the final chapter twelve, a song of primeval creation in negative sounding, a *katabasis* – sets the terms of a powerful projective identification between author in retreat, work and reader, and thereby at the same time the living of sorrow (*douleur*) as the form of death's awareness of itself. (No, Blanchot is not obsessed with death;² but he does know, from Montaigne, and like Montaigne he knows it *against* philosophy, that living is but dying, and may be the attentive awareness of death is the possibility of learning to die. If Blanchot is understood to be death-obsessed, this is but to say that the tradition of the *ars moriendi*, of which Jeremy Taylor may well be the English flower, is no longer widely intelligible, hence the proliferation of the fear and sentimentalization of death in contemporary western societies, above all where patriotism is the reigning idolatry.) How many times does a reader put aside a book because in a passage she encounters something too painful? This is readily understood when the book deals ostensibly with *real* events – let us consider here the voyeurism of watching the pain of others in documentary texts as discussed by the late Susan Sontag – but what is it so to feel the pain with an imaginary character that one puts down the work in order to lay aside, perhaps to deflect, for the moment, one's pain? Jude the Obscure? Anna Karenina? Cassandra in *Troilus and Cressida*? The question, of course, is not new, since an experience of this kind amaz'd Hamlet who asked,

Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all his visage wann'd,

² How touched I was to find, in that simplicity wholly his, the following dedication made by Blanchot to Breton in a copy of *L'Attente, l'oubli* (1962): "Pour André Breton, "En Attente entre voir et dire", avec reconnaissance, avec affection, avec espoir. Blanchot." See *André Breton, 42 rue Fontaine: Livres, vol. I* (Sale catalogue) (Paris: Calmels Cohen, 2003), 59.

Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing!
For Hecuba!

What's Hecuba to him, or he to her,
That he should weep for her?

"What's Hecuba to him or he to her?" – is the genius of the sentence not in the manner in which it is doubly posed to ask at the same time "What is he to Hecuba?" Blanchot's mode of exploring representation is inherently linked to *douleur*, the sorrow in being time – why can I not be rid of the *image* of the departed beloved? What is it that holds me to this image when the beloved is no longer alive? What kind of *fiction* is this image? – and has little or no need of semiotics of any kind, since time, movement and projective identification provide his style of *récit* with all the elements necessary for the reflexion upon Hecuba (or Anne) to him or he to her.

.....

Above all, I have come to realize, Blanchot, *after* Early Romanticism, with Surréalisme, Symbolisme and a study of the politics of the inter-war years – and this I owe entirely to the Courtauld – made everything else in the cultural field of the post-World War II period seem but a working out of positions, *fatal* positions, long set in place by forces over which Europe, which is to say, modern France, has been in self-division and interminable questioning since the Revolution. Lacan, who had the generosity to see Blanchot "tout simplement comme le chantre de nos lettres," became historically and socially legible when situated in relation to the complexes opened up by Surréalisme: the institution of French psychiatry after *La Grande Guerre*, and the nascent encounter with Freud (Hesnard) and phenomenology (Jaspers) as mediated by Ey, or put differently, the meeting on a common historical and conceptual plane of the philosophical with the psycho-pathological; through Blanchot: Mallarmé, Heidegger and the understanding of limit-

experience, anguish and the radicalization of absence, above all in the way that the analytic challenge to the philosophical concept finds its equivalent, beyond theoretical specificities, in the movement of *désœuvrement* and exteriority. From the politics and tragedies of the inter-war years – the problem of technology as we find it portrayed in Rilke's *Sonnette an Orpheus* or in the thought of Simone Weil; the near bankruptcy and crisis of parliamentary democracy with the problem, the *question*, Is democracy a vehicle for capitalism or simply its dupe? – I take away still – and it is in this context that I first read the eminently sane Michael Oakshott – the failure of political form and the confounding of right and left revolutionary thought – and developed in relation to the understanding that I gained on this matter of Left and Right after the French Revolution from the chapter on Marx and counter-revolution in the former *surréaliste* Jules Monnerot's *Sociologie du communisme* which made a definitive impact on my formation. Monnerot shewed that many counter-revolutionary (Conservative) ideas are present in Marx through Hegel in whom many of these ideas found a balance – hence the many parallels between the revolutionary left and the revolutionary right which have stayed with us without resolution – think of the Left Wing Blanquists who become Nationalists, almost proto-Fascists – unless, that is, one accepts the European *idea* of the European Union as a historic compromise in almost Burkean manner of Left and Right to avoid chaos. There is, though, another matter which goes back to the inter-war years: my family by adoption and my family by marriage – European, not without heritage – illuminated my studies in the only way that could be of interest, they helped us to understand something of our past, and there was a moment that we understood that none of our professional colleagues – even the ones of good English families, and certainly not the American academics – understood, still less had a clue about the experience of the interwar years, and that was when we realized that they knew nothing about the status of old families and the various forms of Roman Catholic gentry in France, and thereby nothing whatsoever of the anger and rage of which this class was capable, yet which could in no way incline it to betrayal of *France* and which

would find itself flaying around from Maurrass, to an Action Française *sans* Maurrass, to Vichy *sans* le Maréchal before – as with (the protestant) Mounier and his disciples – going into resistance against Vichy, whence Sartre's limpid observation from the splendid essay "Qu'est-ce qu'un collaborateur? (1945)": "Ce serait une erreur de confondre collaborateur et fasciste [et de la même façon] il faut se garder d'assimiler le collaborateur au bourgeois conservateur." For here is the point to consider, namely, that political anger lived with sufficient force and depth and despair can lead to something near psychotic or at least disintegrative. All the more so when such anger is delegated to the political agency of others, whilst one awaits the outcome. It has always seemed evident, obvious to me that Blanchot's rejection of de Gaulle – accepted by Lacan, Père that he was – had something to do with this class position – though Lacan was upper *middle* class, not gentry, *noblesse de robe* – as well as a fear that politics after the Second World War should no longer be (but might become) a providential politics of the Great Man – Heidegger's oleaginous "Only a god can save us." – Simone de Beauvoir, Dominique Aury, Lacan, Lyotard, Althusser, Foucault and Nancy can all be understood as products of this Catholic culture of the *haute bourgeoisie*. Was not Althusser, in his way, every bit as *Catho* as Claudel (convert and son of peasants), especially in his radical Marxism? Is not the State – that fiction created between Louis XIV and the Terror of post-Revolutionary France – simply the modern form of idolatry par excellence? Whence the duty of Christian thought to reject all forms of nationalism, that related idolatry, and between these two forms of idolatry to refuse, reject everything that is the mediocrity of *juste milieu* in modern and contemporary existing. *Le chantier de nos lettres*, Lacan had said of Blanchot in the *Séminaire on Identification*; one could as justly say, *Le chantier de notre culture*, for that is the significance of Blanchot, poet, and thinker: like Breton, in whom one does not find a single word about Frenchness or *la Patrie* – except to denounce it – and like Guy Debord, Blanchot is a figure through whom and in whom a culture and its possibilities come to critical self-awareness; like *Surréalisme* in 1945 which is everywhere and thereby in no place, as

he wrote in "Quelques réflexions sur le surréalisme," a review of Jules Monnerot's *Le Surréalisme et le sacré*, the thought of Blanchot is everywhere, and its presence is marked, worked through by absence. Such treasure.



Fig. Door to Maurice Blanchot's house in Eze

AUTOMATISM (I): LETTRES DE SÉDUCTION

I

On commence avec *S*, toujours *S*.

Passage de l'écho à la poésie...entre lettre et son ce passage inaperçu qui fait le retour doublé de tout ce qu'on ignorait au début, tout en apportant un éblouissement acoustique, vocalique ce spiral qui nous fait tomber à genoux "en se tournant sur son dos pour relever l'infini du rêve..."

C'est ainsi qu'on trouve que c'est en immigrant qu'on trouve sa voix, en étant expulsé hors de soi dans cette matière qui accepte tout, qui fait transmettre tout à travers elle en se défiant du pouvoir de narcissé.

C'est l'amour qui apprend l'humilité de l'illimité

II

Puis *E*

La femme, c'est un modèle, un principe, un rêve, une bête traquée, une bête indomptable, pas une chimère, mais un proverbe dans toute sa splendeur, dans toute sa laideur. Une trace, un tracé...sentier
Mais, si nous sommes tous hommes ...? Breathe.
Reste à savoir qui vousvoie et qui tutoie...

III

Donc Miroir

L'Echo c'est la différence au départ, ce miroitement du corps vocalique, l'espace chatoyé, ce mouvement acoustique chatoyant. Les substantifs banissent-ils le raisonnement ? Ce mouvement inexorable qui touche si légèrement les choses comme les femmes, quand elles redeviennent Echo.

Musique: Ce sont la nuit et le sommeil qui conversent le mieux

IV

Nous sommes tous hommes...

Nous les poètes, nous sommes tous des femmes, j'avais entendu dire Dominique F., et j'en croirais juste d'ailleurs. Puis je tombe sur ce mot de l'ange sacré, Marina Tsétaïéva: Les poètes sont tous des juifs. Ce qui me faisais re-écrire le mot de F.: Vous les poètes, vous êtes tous des voleurs!

Entre (dans) l'embarras de modèles
et la dérobee
à la pensée

Françoise LE BRUN, Julien LENOIR

Tandis qu'il neigeait sur Paris, tous les gris de la terre ont plané sur Manhattann hier. Juste la petite touche rouge, mouvante, d'un kayak solitaire. Et plus tard, de trois - finalement rejoints par un quatrième, alors que le solitaire rebroussait chemin.

Sur l'eau aussi, les chemins et les rebroussements, avec ou sans traces, tracés.

Pas de rides le dimanche sur cette nappe d'eau travaillante qu'est le port de NY. J'aime les habitats qui travaillent un peu. (Un peu, pas les surexploités.)

Fin du panorama. ~F.

ready, at last, I come to the screen and find myself surprised, gently moved by the scene: I ask: is it you, the time of day, or is it the pictured scene itself that draws from you and all yr. will and, finding you in this way empty, returns, instills in you its *lenteur* - is it the snow, having absorbed all on contact, that lends to yr. words the silence of thought, ce lieu où dans le pli new york rejoint paris, or is it the thought that finds its world in waiting wordlessness

ebloui par ton panorama,

J.

Le merveilleux c'est que tu es

Que penses-tu de la Lutte avec l'ange de Delacroix ? (Je suis de celles qui trouvent qu'il s'agit + d'une danse que d'une lutte.)

Comme amateur de la danse moderne - de Graham jusqu'à Anne-Teresa de Keersmaecker - je pourrais dire que la danse nous instruit que la lutte est le commencement de la danse: pour une Anne-Teresa, ça signifie que la lutte c'est le commencement de conteste entre les sexes, le commencement de l'amour; pour une Graham, ça signifie une lutte au niveau cosmologique - si, elle pensait comme ça! - ç-à-d., le *awakening* - le mot français m'échappe à présent - de (la) conscience puis la reconnaissance de l'existence de l'autre, ultérieurement du cosmos; dès que deux formes se touchent et il n'y a pas nihilation, il y a danse.

Strange - as I was writing (just now) and thinking about the 1930s (le séminaire sur Monnerot) - a period of such sorrow and psychotic anger - it suddenly occurred to me, *as a feeling*, that it is only if there is a sacramental view of creation that there can be feeling and sympathy for what is not oneself. Communion as a sacrament tells us this, and this is so for the whole of creation. I had better sign off, chère amie, before I begin to lose it. I am, believe me, happy - indeed, giddy for all kinds of reasons to do with work, insight, love and heightened sensitivity. Think of Hopkins': "The world is charged with the grandeur of God": feeling enables us to encompass what already is. Even feelings are not in a sense truly our "own" - which is undoubtedly one of Heidegger's (post-Romantic) insights re *Stimmung* - you know, do you not, that French lacks a word for *insight* - whence, too, the musical elongation of sorrowful pain in Blanchot. Weil on hunger is a way of saying, Food kills, kills, that is, our capacity to feel beyond ourselves.

"I"ve never known what to do with the love I feel for you.