Dialogue

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Staff and writers of Dialogue

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Dear Semi-Interested Reader,

You are about to leaf through an assortment of art and literary productions, a portion of which interact with the theme of typography. Or, more likely, you’ve already perused them, only now pausing here motivated by some vague impulse of courtesy or sense of accomplishment. It feels good to have read it all.

But, I urge you, revisit. Typography is an attentiveness to the beauty/ugliness of letters on the page, the meaning of spacing, the fact that something’s here but not there, the way you squint your eyes and the contrast resembles the illuminated rears of lightning bugs on a midsummer’s night. Why did William Overbeeke arrange his “T(o/y)pography” in such a dizzying concoction (p.33)? And why can’t Leah Nieboer write a straightforward poem (p.7-8, 23-24)? Or, moreover, why does she choose not to? Why a tree of words (p.21)?

If you’ve ever read an e. e. cummings’ poem or just seen one of the so-called visual poems by the Frenchman Guillaume Apollinaire you know a funky configuration can enhance the message. Or undermine the message, for better or worse. Or be the message. For a famous example, e. e. cummings’ poem “1(a)” vertically stretches its 25 characters to mimic the solitary descent of a single leaf, while the poem reads….I don’t want to ruin it. I just ask you bring the same level of investigation to these works.

Cheers,

P.S. Kudos to Claude Garamond for this, his, font.
# Dialogue: Typography Issue

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*dialogue 02*
A Commiseration with the Wind

Wind, you howl with gusting breath
Passionate but meaningless--
Not a word to speak to us--
Only screeching unto death.
Though you scream into my ear,
Wuth'ring like a hurricane
Thrashing me with storming rain,
Coherent speech I'll never hear.
Frail your language sounds to me,
Shatt'ring once it rings in me.

What, friend, do you wish to say?
Drag your claw across the stone,
Whip the seas until they groan--
But I'll fail to hear your way.
All your ardor stirs my soul,
Wond'ring if you speak to me
Willing you made sense to me,
Yet I only hear a howl.
If I only understood--
If I could, my friend, I would!

Oftentimes I feel your pain
When I pray to God on high
When I cry, confess, and sigh,
Weeping like a hurricane.
Never can my mouth make words--
Even sung in poets' tongue
Or with wisdom finely spun--
Heaven can or will give worth.
Madly I expectorate,
Yet do not communicate!

If only I could strain my voice--
Form that sweet and blessed phrase
Which, when uttered, heals and saves--
Only then could I rejoice!
I have begged a thousand times--
God won't tell me what to say
For I can't ask Him in *His* way--
All my prayers but clanging chimes.
I'd explain, my God, my woe,
But don't know how to say so!

Kathleen O'Bannon
entomology

eleven winged-things pinned in a glass
display case. you found the last hovering
on the rim of fall, near the mums
in the kitchen window-box.

upon this twelfth specimen, you betrayed
a masochistic satisf-
    action, of wanting
    and snaring
    and keeping.

detached you sunk
this velveteen flyer under your heavy
finger, to the nectared-cotton of
ethyl acetate,
(or household
cleaner).

so you muffle the im-
    perceptible strike of wing on jar.

something else:

    when we go out with our friends,
you pin my side to your hand.

leah nieboer

dialogue 07
[ the inquiry of mushrooms ]

between mushrooms, the interloper
steps methodically toward an end defined in his small, lined notebook

this is proved:
with his nose in the fold he missed a small wingbeat the exact !flutter of an eyelash once fluoresc-ed upon a mushroom

so this pitter went unscribbled.

*leah nieboer*
Theory of Mind

Wikipedia wants me to believe in stubbing my toe which for them is the only proper definition for pain. Furthermore it is thoroughly interested in Rene Descartes’ now disproven concept of pain pathways.

Unrelated in that same article appears a rough-hewn portrait of the man proponing his dual contention that fluids in one’s gut, he calls them animal spirits, flinch at stimuli and that the beasts feel this not being lesser.

Jacob Eizenga
"Birmingham"


tyranically

by

the broken binding. Mother a chews up her own feet and puts them in castes, setting broken social scenes at Birmingham lunch counter's, crusted sugared over. "Dear self," I patched into a letter, "I put together pieces of a dream." Christ incarcerated, God strung up. Silence

b. l.

like syrupy sweets. Imagination deranged. "Dear self," I patched into a letter, "I put together pieces of a dream." Christ incarcerated, God strung up. Silence

Haan

fills the void where a Word (untranslatable, uncontainable, inimitable, irrevocable) once stood. Inspiration contained. Hemmed out by Theos and imprisoned by Logos.
Karl Sparrman Untitled Photography
Aspen Leaf Volvo

aimed toward
an orange vermillion gate of Gold,
through soda can stacks,
away from cereal box plains, together they road

extinguishing childhood innocence with cigarette cherries
they chased a salty desert
a sled of maturation dragged, up
through burned nostrils, listened eyes, insightful eardrums

grabbed blank agendas, burned ice bridges
Sherbet sweetness tickled

bewildered wisdom clung
morning Glories hung
UP
the gutters of the mind

golfballkidneystonescloggged
the 1800 mile pissing contest
timing chains disintegrated in revolutions,
((around)) a 1966 Swedish alternator

Positive to (-)
without a circuit they were done
(Pb)ed gasoline has no ping
time to turn around

Jonathan Coe
Vegetarianism With A Literary Voice:  
A Review of *Eating Animals* by Jonathan Safran Foer  
Brett Beasley

If you recognize the name Jonathan Safran Foer, it is likely for his reputation as a novelist. If you have read his novels, *Everything is Illuminated* (2002) and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), then you know that Foer has a gift for crafting energetic and insightful stories that never fail to surprise his readers. Also, if you have read these works you might be surprised to learn that Foer’s latest release is not a novel but a work of nonfiction entitled *Eating Animals*. The book chronicles Foer’s quest to understand the meat we eat, where it comes from, and to what extent that matters. Indeed, this kind of work is not altogether foreign for Foer, who researched heavily for his first novel, first as a philosophy student at Princeton and then afterward in the Ukraine. In his latest book, however, Foer has taken research to the next level, hiring two full-time fact checkers and researching and traveling for three years to meet personally with farmers, ranchers, owners of meat-packing facilities, in short, anyone who has a connection to the way our meat is produced. If this book is starting to sound like a piece of propaganda to you, then rest assured that it isn’t. Foer is not interested in simply listing facts to elicit a commitment, but it is on a path of exploration, and is, in many senses, furthering a conversation.

The book’s first appeal is that we realize this issue matters. Whether it is diet books such as *Skinny Bitch* (which advocates for an entirely vegan diet) or Michael Pollan’s wildly popular books including *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* and *In Defense of Food* (both of which promote a conscientious omnivorous diet), it is clear that the topic of eating animals has been a subject of increasing public debate and social concern. Foer is happy to be the first to acknowledge the incredible cultural importance our food carries. He appeals to his own Jewish tradition to show how “eating and storytelling are inseparable—the saltwater is also tears; the honey not only tastes sweet, but makes us think of sweetness; the matzo is the bread of our affliction.” Foer puts all his cards on the table, stating “The whole aim of this book could be summed up in the question, ‘should we serve turkey at Thanksgiving?’” i.e., given that food conveys what we value, does eating meat accurately pass on our values or does it contradict them?

Thus, Foer’s book is not about rigid moral codes but about people and their personal stories. As such, the book has a surprising cast of heroes: Foer’s grandmother whose chicken with carrots is an important memory from Foer’s childhood, and who, while fleeing from Nazis in the forests of Germany during World War II, once refused a piece of pork though she was starving because it wasn’t kosher; Frank Reese, whom Foer calls “the last turkey farmer” and befriends on his journey; C., an unnamed slaughterhouse-worker-turned-animal-rights-activist who helps Foer sneak inside a factory farm to see how industries take care of chickens; as well as many others. Even the story itself is not Foer’s own self-centered journey, but one that has everything to do with Foer’s new role as a father; the birth of his son was the impetus behind the research that became *Eating Animals.*
Foer’s book has a central gift to offer to the current canon of vegetarian literature: a face. He makes every attempt to make his facts accessible and relevant, sometimes even employing word pictures and graphics. (For example, one chapter’s title page has a square showing the size of an egg-laying hen’s cage.) He is witty and heartwarming when he speaks of his dog and of his friend Frank Reese with tears in his eyes as he sends his turkeys to be slaughtered. Additionally, Foer is transparent at noting his own failures and inconsistencies and shows a great deal of patience and open-mindedness even when he visits people he does not agree with. In other words, Foer becomes a friend; someone we can relate to and share with. Rather than employing rationalistic ethical arguments or using facts and figures about environmental hazards or chilling descriptions of slaughter in unimaginable environments, Foer becomes a simple guy with all the same questions and concerns as any of the rest of us and follows those questions to a place so many others are not willing to go. What he finds he cannot keep to himself: continuing to support factory farming is perhaps the single worst thing we can do for ourselves, for each other, and for our children. There are very few things that cut closer to the core of anything and everything we can call “moral.” If Foer’s book makes a strong case for vegetarianism it is largely because he himself made that decision after what he had seen, heard, and experienced in places most of us will only be able to travel through his book. He encourages us to join him, not by adopting a new set of ethical principles but through truly living out care, compassion, and justice—the things we already claim to practice.
Aletheia Shin Raku Vessels Ceramic
WINTER HAS ITS DOG-DAYS, TOO

December, mid-Michigan, and this Sunday is taking place
On a tabula rasa.
Lining the street, sugar maples, calligraphic,
Form sentences
   I cannot understand
Stark against a color-vacant sky that does or does not
Foreshadow the hospital bedsheets pulled
Over your head
   for good. Kant lives on
Menacing in his conclusion,
   No, we cannot know
What the world says,
   only what we say about the world.
Which is to say,
Today’s utter stillness is a language no more,
   no less
Intelligible than the sparrows’ chatter,
   two of innumerable parties
We’re forever outside.

Mitchell Terpstra
WHITE NOISE

Another Sunday, mid-Michigan, and the sun is M.I.A. like

December clouds, in full term,
    are dump trucks
Disappearing behind their furious unloading
    White indignance straight from the Pentateuch.

If squalor is the inheritance, one yearns for hibernation;
    Appeased, one wants the defibrillator.
That, my friend, is
Bernoulli’s principle of the heart,
    how one’s present
Yearning is for whatever’s not present.

Snow falling elsewhere and Chia Tao says
Happiness is having both options on the table,
The not having to be alone.
December Hymn

Teach us, Lord, divine endurance
Not to faint beneath life's weight
Give us love and bless'd assurance,
Guide our paths and make them straight
Long we've labored through Decembers
Cruel and cold as scornful sin
Show us mercy, warm and tender
Give us rest, though false we've been

Teach us, Lord, divine contentment
Just as you displayed on earth
Though we showed you chilled resentment
Still you saved and gave us worth
Came you not in dark December?
Lord, you know its frozen breath
Help us rightly to remember
You endured it unto death

Teach us, Lord, divine persistence
Even when we've lost our hope
Trust we'll keep in your assistance
Though your aid seems out of scope
When the world heaves harsh Decembers
Praise will echo through the snows
And our agony surrenders
In your flaming mercy's throes

Kathleen O'Bannon
HEX

Womb of brood comb
as gloom of scuted dome
tremor in Pythagoras’ hands
trebling of descending snow-
flakes and the cyclone at
Saturn’s northern pole.

Cameron Morse

Dialectics

No poem is real like a torn toenail is real.

A poem is just a flutter in the porch light of your brain, a flicker in the filament. The toenail, on the other hand, contains the DNA to grow you a brand-new brain.

The poem is just a balloon like any balloon is filled with breath; the toenail, a compact disc like any disc is filled with light.

It is in this way that the light of my toenail beams into the porch of your brain.

Cameron Morse
In med school, when late too for dinner missed-firing. a glitch: your periphery knee-jerk from my hand tells me you’re alive

I still am fibered nervous—

inevitable brain-mold which occurs by chronic apathy

[ lovely ] chronic pain

lacking action potential, conversation halts with excessive fork-scraping

unmyelinated:
instead, an XL sweatshirt makes thin insulation
[ magnetic resonance imaging ]

it’s noninvasive you
said meaning it won’t poke through to my insides.
(this is a lie): it allows you to see all the soft tissues
without stitches

please

empty everything you said
from your pockets before you climb into the magnet

if i have trouble breathing
inside, there is a red button
no one ever presses to escape

inside is like jackhammers
espresso machines
God mumbling
background noise
under my breath, an incantation strangled
by the conclusion you leave me:
a burned-out image

leah nieboer

dialogue 24
The Sign

How long have you held off your breath, waiting for a sign?
And will anything less than dead men walking convince you?
I have seen only small miracles, and they were hardly that,
Though I have gazed long into the sky and upon the mountain.
But this I say to you, and not myself alone:
Follow fast the sun that it might lead you home.
And when you can no longer walk together, be together.
And do not squander from the treasury of time,
Always waiting, never doing,
But be content to know
That the trees themselves are grace
And you yourself are light.

Still, for the sake of your longing heart, I will tell you,
This light does not reveal the sign, but is itself the sign.
The alluring gleam of our low star, large upon horizons,
Is only God ringing the dinner bell in his own house,
Saying that we too can come to the banquet.

Griffin Jackson
Rachelle Wunderink
It's all Greek to me, Collage
Faithfulness

I.

I cleaved to her

In our time we abided by many of our closest friends

as they clanged like jetsam against each other, torpedoed temporarily into an uneasy harmony

Then as a calm branched days into days we would watch a current pull them over separate waves

We would watch them crossed by mist and tossed beyond our waves

Always I cleaved to her
II.

She and I lingered

childless in the church aisles clasping others’ hands for all our years

Our second pastor—our first had passed—cast me his condolences Thick ropes he dropped which I could not catch

I lay quietly as he cared for me and wore his words like blanketing as he said that she is risen and is now in peace

He propped my head up with a cushion as he claimed that she is risen

Yet I felt her linger

III.

She had dissolved

Yes, others spoke of us in memory as if we were one flesh

and as they called up our piety I remembered our long courtship when, perhaps, I had cared for her best

It was then when as if blessed I would beg her to let me melt against her skin At first she would not succumb yet she let me in

Then in autumn she succumbed again then she faded, then she fell,

then she dissolved

IV.

I do not believe

Yet through every service I worshipped at her side

I would sit by watching restless children wriggling in the pews while I wrested from the pastor ministrations for her

She was my hope, my rock—now is she lifted Now can I hear her hovering on a breath even as a dimness numbs me deaf

Now as a darkness hums around my head I hope to catch the rising light

For I did not believe in life after her

Jacob Eizenga
haiku

stranded by
the rain / worms

bed in the naked

road / a loosened
shoe lace

Cameron Morse
We call nothing. We call straight from the summit. It's always sunny. They see it as the sun.

Don't count on us to chart the things on. We're very unreliable. Follow our trails, you'll be lost.

We've got the pine needles on our side, not theirs. We see it as proof that we're the mountain's children. Millions of years ago, we were there. We've been washed away in a flood. Some say, "But there's no mountain there."

Shower are rare. Some days it snows, but they see it as proof that we're the mountain's children. Millions of years ago, we were there. We've been washed away in a flood. Some say, "But there's no mountain there."

Never climb this mountain to see them. They're just a screen to see what's on the other side. It's not worth seeing. Henry said.

People on this side of the mountain don't like the people on the other side.
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