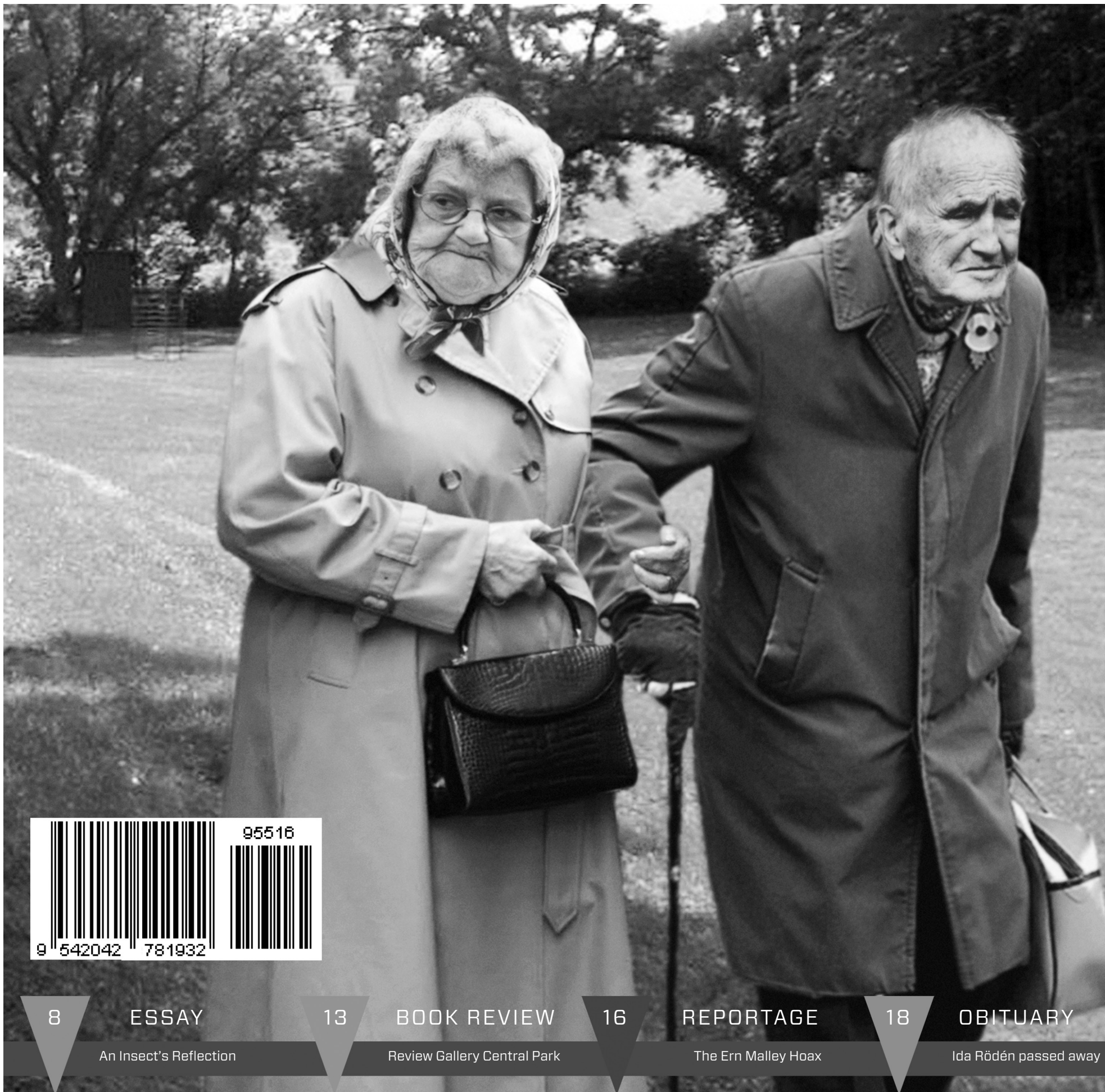


A PUBLICATION DEDICATED
TO THE FABRICATION OF LIFE

THE UNWRITTEN QUARTERLY

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Photo: IR Archives

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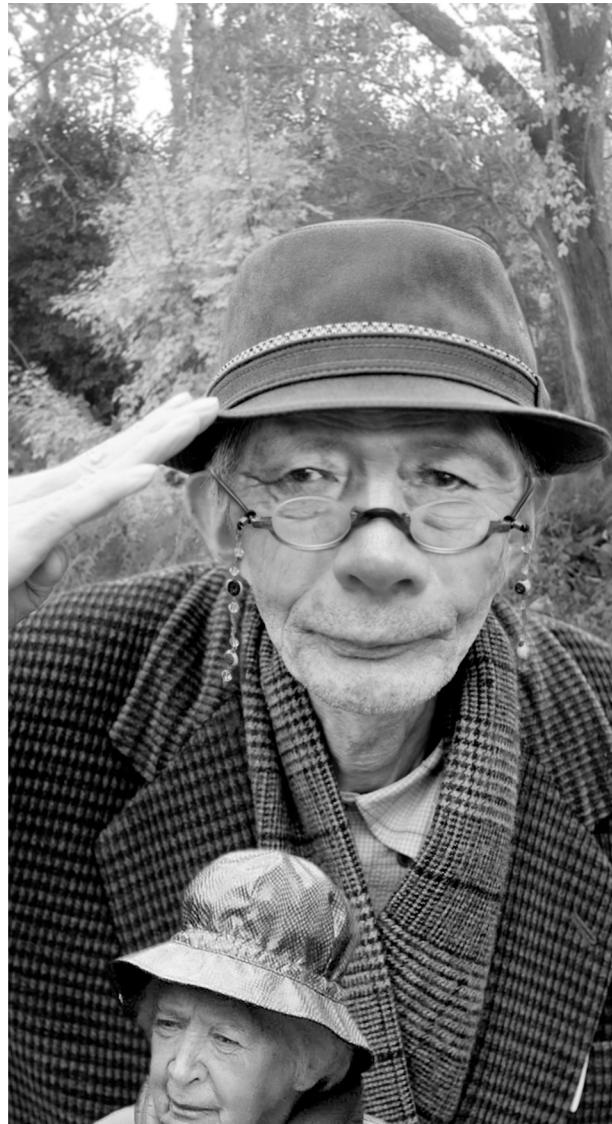
a detective novel called *Mr. Wright's Incomplete Presence*.

Araki Yasunari, who died earlier this year, composed various essays, many of which were publicized in and around the Bay Area. Since his many essays were written under different names, he was never known as the author of his work. He was the son of the much-debated Japanese poet Araki Yasusada. His article for this issue is Araki Yasunari's own approach to the case of his father, and is the only one he wrote under his own name.

Julian Carax is a novelist and a current obituary for *The New York Times* and *The Narrative Explorer*. He is the author of three novels, the most recent, *In Memory of ... a Different Kind of Man*, was published by Harvill Secker in 2006.

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LETTERS FROM THE READERS

I think it is cowardly to write under a taken name. If you cannot stand for what you write, why write at all? This whole machinery of falsifying evidence makes me sick to the stomach. My great grandmother died in the Holocaust, and when I hear that this horrible event has been used in a way of reaching recognition, I cannot put into words my indignation.

Signed: a fourth generation survivor

I believe that the hoax you are referring to is that of Benjamin Wilkomirski. His actual name was Bruno Dössekker. He adopted his constructed identity as a Holocaust survivor, and through his alias he published the fictional memoirs *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood*. The memoir became an international bestseller, winning numerous awards. Today it is more or less accepted that the book is a fraud. I will not go into detail, or form any sort of opinion, in this specific case. I will instead address the question you posed about writing under different names—an occurrence that has been prevalent for centuries.

In most cases, anonymity should not be seen as a trick but as a need. In order to imagine another life in the most detailed way, taking on a different persona might be the only way. To take a step back from the self becomes a way of putting words onto things that are unspeakable. With this approach comes an understanding of otherness, an understanding from within. The imagination and the make-believe provide meaning to experience and understanding to knowledge. It becomes a way through which people make sense of the world.

Theodor Adorno famously declared that there could be no poetry after Auschwitz. For him, the problem of poetry was that it would always fail to produce the knowledge of its own impossibility. Art, as something supposedly free, became impossible when life became indifferent and expendable. The death camps brought an end to the very idea of the autonomous subject. And to return to artistic subjectivism was, according to Adorno, inappropriate, since the suffering of the victims would be turned into an aesthetically constructed narrative. It is, however, clear that he was not asking for an end to the art. Art serves an important function, for it refuses narrative

coherence, and thereby opens up for discontinuity. By doing so, the art can work without laying claim, that whatever it addresses can be comprehended in its whole. Adorno did not call for silence. Rather, he called for a form of art, which bore witness to its failure, artworks which presented the fact that the un-representable exists. Writing under a different name is one possible approach. By doing so, the poetry reaches beyond the individual's original self-expression and becomes something shared. In this way, what is impossible has been made possible, while simultaneously pointing to the impossibility in the quest itself.¹

Dear *The Unwritten Quarterly*,

I heard that there is a theory about “nonexistent objects.” What exactly does that mean?

**Best,
Miki Stephens**

There is a theory about nonexistent objects, although it has not been fully recognized since many scholars find it hard to grasp. The man behind the theory, Alexius von Meinong (1853-1929), was largely ignored in both the English-speaking and German philosophical worlds. If he did manage to get any kind of attention, it was mainly in the form of ridicule. Meinong believed that, in addition to the objects we can see (objects such as tables and cars), and those that are abstract (objects of mathematics), there are objects that have no being at all. This domain of objects includes such things as the “golden mountain” and the “round square,” i.e. both possible and impossible objects. He called them nonexistent objects.²

In his theory, Meinong was concerned with the principle of “intentionality”—to love is to love something; to imagine is to imagine something. Every intentional act is about something. But sometimes people imagine, desire or fear things that do not exist. Some fear ghosts, some believe in Santa Claus. While some philosophers came to the conclusion that intentionality is not a real relation, and therefore does not require the existence of an object, Meinong came up with another solution: there is an object for every mental state, if not an existing, then at least a nonexistent one. According to Meinong, Santa Claus does not exist, but this does not imply that there is no Santa. According to

him there is a Santa Claus, and he belongs to the class of nonexistent objects. To say that Santa Claus has a big, round belly and a full white beard, is not to say that there is such a thing.³

Fictional characters and objects would certainly fit into Meinong's category of nonexistent objects. In his article “Possible Worlds of Fiction and History,” Lubomír Doležel writes, that it does not make any sense to ask whether Gustav Flaubert was telling the truth, or lied, when he made Emma Bovary die by poisoning herself. It does not make any sense because there was no world, no life, and no death of Emma Bovary prior to Flaubert's creation of her. But it is appropriate, and necessary, to ask whether a historian of literature is correct when he states that Emma died of poisoning.⁴

Hi,

I am a literature major at Stanford University, and I am interested to hear what you consider the relationship between fictional worlds and reality to be? Do we write to engage with the world, or to escape it?

Mark Foster

I would not say that fictional worlds are imitations or representations of actuality. They are rather realms of possibilities, and as such they establish diverse relationships to the actual world. Raskolnikov is not a man to be found in the actual world. Raskolnikov is a possible man inhabiting the alternative realm of Feodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*.

There are obviously different reasons why someone decides to write. I, for one, do not write in order to escape reality. I write to understand reality and to create it. Years ago, when I was obsessively contemplating over the spectacle of the world, and the ever-changing state of things, I was eventually convinced that there is an inherent fiction in everything. I came to the conclusion that to recognize reality as a form of fiction, and fiction as a form of reality, is equally necessary and useless. Writing became a way of seeing something in constantly new ways. I all of a sudden had the whole universe to take and gain from without ever leaving my apartment. Life is fundamentally a mental state, and everything valid is valid to the extent one considers it valid. If death is called a

¹ Elaine Martin, “Re-reading Adorno: The ‘after-Auschwitz’ Aporia,” *Forum* 2 (Spring 2006), <http://forum.llc.ed.ac.uk/archive/02/martin.php>.

² Kenneth J. Perszyk, *Nonexistent objects: Meinong and contemporary philosophy*, (Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993), 1-2.

³ Maria Reicher, “Nonexistent Objects,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, last modified September 8, 2008, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nonexistent-objects>.

⁴ Lubomír Doležel, “Possible Worlds of Fiction and History,” *New Literary History*, Vol. 29, No. 4, (1998), 790.

sleep, it is because it seems like sleep on the outside; if it is called a new life, it is because it seems different from life. It is constantly an act of fabrication, and the result is a series of manufactured realities.

Einstein realized the importance of the imagination when he wrote “I’m enough of an artist to draw freely on my imagination, which I think is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited.

Imagination encircles the world.” Knowledge binds us to sets of laws, while imagination facilitates change.⁵

⁵ Kathleen Taylor, “Is imagination more important than knowledge? Einstein,” *The Times Higher Education*, (November 2002), <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=172613§ioncode=26>.



Photo: IR Archives

I'M THE EMPTY STAGE WHERE VARIOUS ACTORS ACT OUT VARIOUS PLAYS

By Bernardo Soares



Photo: IR Archives

I once created a writer, whom I used as a tool, so that I could eventually make myself into nothing. I made myself into nothing so that I could become everything and everyone. At this point I am not even sure which one of us is the original.

The only way I will survive in this world is by keeping alive my dreams, without ever fulfilling them. The fulfillment of a dream never measures up to what I imagine, and is therefore always

a disappointment. To dream with intensity, so extreme it makes the distinction between the two meaningless, is the only thing that keeps me alive. So I have made myself into the character of a book, a life one reads. And I make myself into the author who writes that book, and the reader who reads it. I only feel things so that I can write that I felt them. From so much self-revising, I have destroyed myself; but I have also created myself anew. Better and happier are those who, recognizing

that everything is fictitious, write novels before someone else does. So I write my novel, but without ever lifting my pen, and the result is a novel that is nowhere to be found.¹

Everything interests me, but nothing holds me. When I am thinking about a person I recently met, I remember his slightest facial movements, I note the way he utters his words; but I hear him without listening. I will never remember the sense of what was said, by me or by him. And so I often repeat what I have already repeated, or ask again what he already answered. But while I will never remember what was said, I am able to thoroughly describe the facial muscles he used to say what I do not remember, or the way he listened to the things I do not remember telling him.²

I am immersed in creating an elusive universe, and in my imagination I line up the characters who populate my inner world. They all reside inside me, with their own real and imperfect lives. Take me seriously when I say: no nostalgia hurts as much as nostalgia for things that never existed. The longing I feel when I think of the countryside where I really lived cannot begin to compare to the memories and the grief I feel as I mourn the non-reality of my dreamed characters and landscapes. All the things that only existed as a dream are imprinted in my memory, and I now spend hours remembering having dreamed them.³

When I go for a stroll outdoors and I pass a house, or an isolated cottage, I cannot help but imagine myself living in each one of them. As soon as I have abandoned one of these homes, I am filled with nostalgia for the time I lived there. I am not only living inside these houses. I also live the daily lives of everyone living inside of them. I am all of them at once—I am the mother, the father, the son, and the daughter. I take up their opinions, and then go on to turn their personalities into things that have a resemblance to my dream. This process of creating a picture with figures whose lives are lived all at the same time, leads to an incredible degree of depersonalization, and it is hard not to feel a general weariness throughout one's entire being.⁴

How much I have learned, without having lived. How much I have been thinking, without having thought. I am exhausted from adventures I have experienced without ever moving. I bear the scars of all the battles I have avoided, and my muscles

¹ Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, (New York, Penguin Classics, 2003), 169-170.

² *Ibid.*, 20.

³ *Ibid.*, 88-89.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 254.

are sore from all the attempts I have never thought of making. In dreams I have the impression of effort without actual effort. I can enter these battles without the risk of being wounded, and I can reason without trying to solve some problem. I can experience the worst anxieties, the most abusive torments, as well as the greatest victories. I can experience all of this, just as long as I make my dreams vivid, sharp, and real. I have become so entirely the fiction of myself, that any natural feeling is immediately transformed into an imaginary feeling.⁵

As a living person, as an invented character, as the editor of this magazine, I am, in large measure,

⁵ Ibid., 309.

the prose I write. I unroll myself in sentences and paragraphs. I punctuate myself. This magazine is a celebration of the art of the imagination, the art of the novel. These two go hand in hand, because the best way to start dreaming is through books. Novels are especially helpful for the beginner. The first step is to learn how to give in completely to the reading, to live totally with the characters of a novel. When one's own family and its troubles seem flat and loathsome by comparison, that is when progress has been made. I know no pleasure like that of books, and yet I read very little. For me books are merely introductions to dreams, and no introductions are necessary for someone who naturally enters into conversations with them. I

have actually never been able to lose myself in a book; as I am reading, my imagination has always disrupted the narrative flow. A few minutes in, it is I who am writing. There are people who truly suffer because they never got to live, in real life, next to Mr. Pickwick or Madame Bovary. I am one of those people. Whatever disaster, it will always be beautiful in a novel, because the blood shed within them are never real blood, and those who die in them will never disintegrate. I cannot help but think that perhaps the novel is a more perfect life than life itself. We live only to create it.⁶

⁶ Ibid., 345.

KIERKEGAARD AND HOW THE WHOLE WORLD CAME INTO EXISTENCE

By Penélope Aldaya

This is a story, that is all. The story took place in Copenhagen, the capital city of Denmark. The young Søren Kierkegaard lived without any desire to make contact with the outside world. Those who believed themselves to know him assumed that his dreamy, somewhat introverted nature was a sign of a teenager in either melancholy or a teenager in love. And in a certain sense he was in love, although the subject of his affection was not a girl, nor a boy, but thought. What made him more excited than anything was the way one thought connected with another. At transitions like these, he started to understand how his mind worked, and his hopes and expectations were fulfilled. If he was seen with his head bowed down, it was not because he was fantasizing about a girl, but because he was listening to his own thoughts. When it seemed like his eyes were dreamy, it was because his thoughts started to become visible to him. Søren Kierkegaard was and remained a dreamer.¹

The story continued in the Kierkegaard family's living room. Søren occasionally asked permission to go out, but his father would more often than not refuse. His father was a dry and strict man, but underneath he had a great imagination. To compensate, his father would offer to go for a walk inside the living room. It was left entirely up to Søren to decide where they should go. Hand in hand, they would walk back and forth, describing the world as perceived in the imagination. In their



Photo: IR Archives

stories they sometimes ended up in a nearby castle in Spain. Other times they walked down to the seashore in Denmark. Or they just walked about the streets in Copenhagen. Everything they passed was described with the utmost detail. They greeted people passing by, they stopped for traffic, or they took a quick break outside the elderly woman's fruit stand, since the smell was more tempting than ever. Whatever they experienced, it was described so accurately and vividly, that at the end of their walk Søren would be overwhelmed—as if he had actually been outdoors the whole day.²

² Ibid., 120.

In the beginning, his father would be the one describing the world, but as Søren grew older he quickly learned the magic art of storytelling. If it started as a single narrative, it soon turned into a dialogue. When walking along familiar paths they gave full attention to one another's words, and saw to it that nothing was changed or left out. Søren's whole world came into existence during these conversations. He did not require a park or a forest for his adventures, but merely what he could always find: a little room, preferably with a small window.³

³ Ibid., 120.

¹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments – Johannes Climacus*, (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1985), 118.

AN INSECT'S REFLECTION ON LIFE

By Gregor Samsa

Sitting hidden by a grove of trees I can observe the surroundings without any risk of detection. Being a silent observer is a virtue I will never take for granted. What gives a place its special character is not necessarily its topography, its buildings, or its people. Rather, it is the sum of every chance encounter, every memory, or every written story. For me, this park is at once a place to escape and a place to guard.

No one will come for me. Of that I made sure. Thus, I have a long time to think undisturbed about how I can recognize my life from scratch. My normal senses are long since gone. Others, some still unfamiliar to me, replaced them. But when I see the group of barbecuing adults, sitting not far from my outpost, I am stricken by the sounds of their eating. There are so many different sorts of eating sounds, but what are always audible are chewing teeth. Because of that, I should know that people need their teeth to eat, and that nothing can be done even with the most beautiful toothless jawbone. I

really have an appetite, you see, but not for these sorts of things. How these people stuff themselves, all while I am dying. And I lift my head up a little and turn my attention toward the three young boys investigating an undefined footpath. They are right next to me, but far too occupied by their adventurous game, and I slip by unnoticed. As if anything else was ever possible. To my right, young lovers are intertwined on one of the park's wooden benches, and in front of me an old couple crosses the grass. Late summer has exhausted much of the greenness, and the ground is dappled with brown, dusty patches.

The old couple crossing the lane is my parents. For a long time, I kept repeating to myself that really, nothing unusual was going on. But I eventually had to admit to myself that my inability to communicate with the people I loved the most affected me like a great swollen commotion on all sides. I soon realized that I would not be able to endure this much longer, and I left my home, my parents, and my sister behind. Nowadays, I only get to see them on rare occasions. At this moment, my parents make their way slowly forward. My father is bundled up in his old dark coat; all the time setting down his walking

stick carefully. When he would say something, he almost always stood still and waited for my mother to give him his rightful attention. But I would just sit here, in silence, observing their behavior.

When a medical condition prevented me from continuing my life as usual, the park offered me the possibility of solitude. I was in no mood to worry, and the park became a sanctuary against the grinding demands of the streets and of human interaction. Things that read as alarming behavior in the streets, or in family homes, are dismissed as casual amusement in the park. I still fantasize of one day waking up to find myself in my own body, tucked down in my own bed, in my own room, in my old apartment. But I try to embrace life for what it is, and I find that this collective backyard, this constructed nature, is the biggest supporter of irrational thoughts and imaginations.

As I was thinking all this over, there walked a young man on the gravel path in front of me. He went to one of the benches and sat down. I know him as Marco Stanley Fogg, a scholarly young man who lost everything. A man must have his home, and for this man the park was the closest thing to a home he could get. The same goes for me. "Hey, you," a voice called out, but it was not directed toward me. Mr. Fogg looked up as an old man approached him. Without waiting for any response the old man sat down beside him, stuck out his hand and introduced himself as Frank. "You can call me Bob if you want to," he said, "I'm not fussy. Just as long as you don't call me Bill, we'll get along fine."¹ And then he launched into a complicated story about gambling. It was obvious that Mr. Fogg lost him after the third sentence. He's a tired man by now, Mr. Fogg. Each day I see how he becomes a little dirtier, a little more broken and confused, a little more removed from everyone else. He spends a portion of each day looking for food. To make it bearable, he gives funny names to the garbage cans. They are cylindrical restaurants, potluck dinners, and municipal care packages—anything that can avert him from saying what they really are. His strength is gone by now, and he only moves short distances. I had no intention of talking to the two men on the benches. I knew that it was impossible. We are unfortunately not part of the same story, and I can therefore not be of any assistance, nor make myself visible to them.

My body was at this point too difficult to move. The attempt went so slowly. I finally hurled myself forward with all my force, and choosing my



Photo: IR Archives

¹ Paul Auster, *Moon Palace*, (New York, Penguin, 1990), 63.

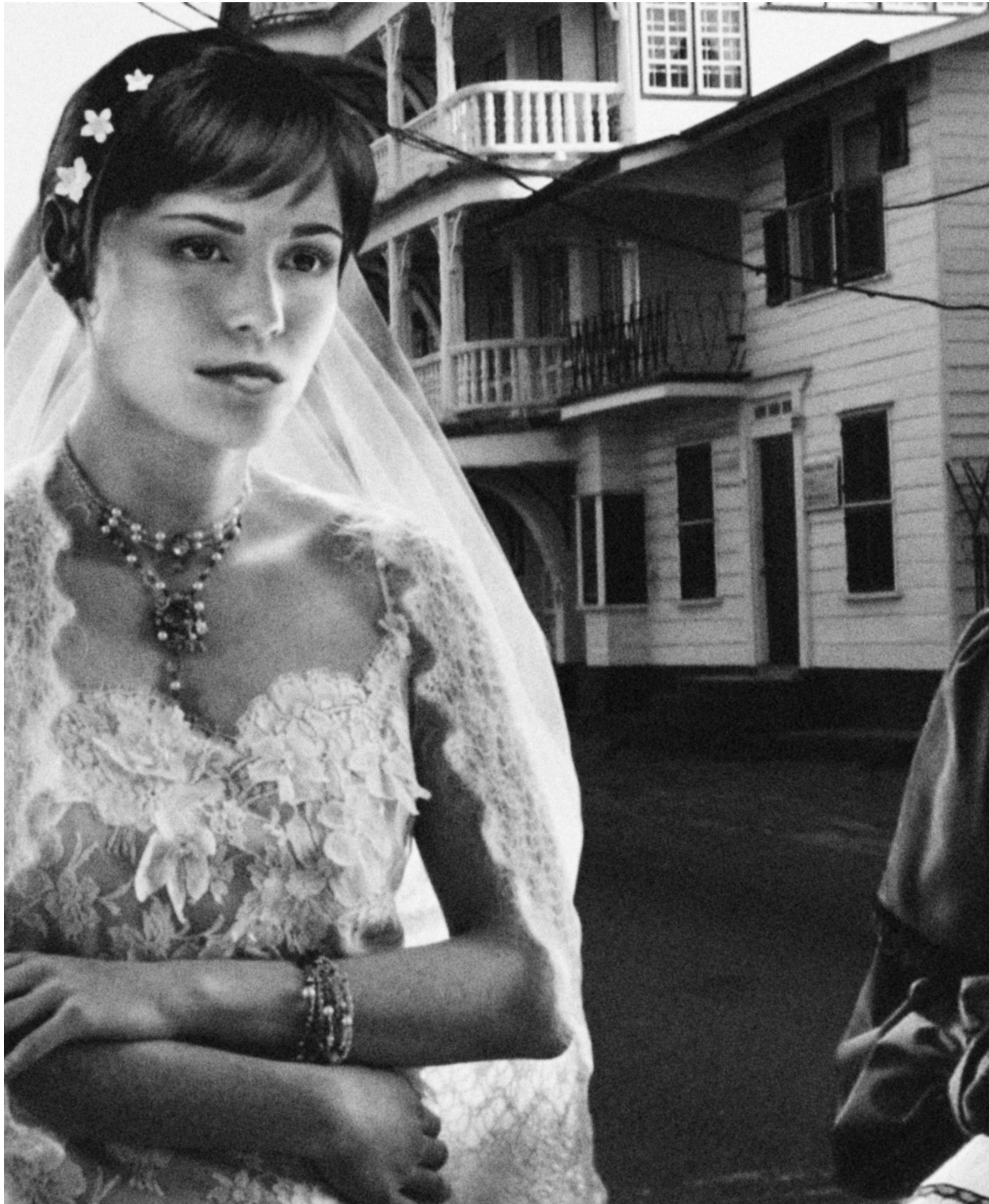
direction incorrectly, I hit a tree trunk hard. I tried to get my upper body in an upright position and finally, in spite of my width and weight, my body mass followed the turning of my head. But I was afraid to move forward any further, because I might eventually fall, and it would take a miracle to prevent my head from getting injured. So I stayed at my post watching my small limbs fighting one

another, without any hopes of imposing order in their arbitrary movements. It struck me how easy all this could be solved if someone were to come to my aid. Two strong people would be sufficient. They would only need to put their arms under my arched back and flip my body around onto the ground, where my legs would then acquire a purpose. My small limbs would obey perfectly. But

there are only seven people who can assist me. Only seven people are part of my story, and I have long since decided to separate myself from them, partly to spare them from my awkward appearance. So I will just sit here until a wind will carry me forward and place me upright on my feet again.



Photo: IR Archives





AN ANALYSIS OF THE CRYPTIC NOTES PASSED DOWN BY HOLDN CAULFIELD

By Oskar Schell



Photo: IR Archives

I will begin this report by first presenting some of the notes found after the unexplained disappearance of Holden. They were sent to me two weeks after he was last seen at the southeast exit of the New York Central Park.

Thursday, November 16. 09:04am

Rube and Si Morley enter at the southwest corner of the park carrying two brown paper bags. The weather is cold and clear. Rube is dressed in a red jacket, black chinos, and a blue baseball cap. Si is dressed in a black peacoat and dark blue jeans. In deep conversation, they turn onto the curve of a dirt-and-gravel path. A dozen yards off the path,

beside an outcropping of rock, they decide to sit down. They pull sandwiches out of the paper bags. Still in conversation they start to eat. Excerpts of conversation (Si to Rube): "Rube, I think I like you personally. But I feel I have to say: Who gave you or anyone else the right to poke into my private affairs?"¹ After some arguing, they stand up and walk over to a wire trash-basket. Rube immediately throws out the leftover of his sandwich. For Si, it takes a little longer. Out of his pocket he pulls a napkin, he wipes his face and uses the same napkin to blow his nose. Then he thoroughly empties his pockets of receipts and other forms of junk, all while talking to Rube. The subject of the conversation has moved on to Si's

¹ Jack Finney, *Time and Again*, (New York, Touchstone, 1995), 14.

girlfriend—a sensitive subject it seems. They turn back toward the footpath. Si seems tense. He is checking the pulse of his left wrist. They continue walking toward the southeast corner, where they exit the park at 09:57am.

Monday, November 20. 09:11am

Rube and Si Morley enter the park at the same spot as earlier. It is partly cloudy, but warm. They wear the same clothes as four days ago, except for Si who wears brighter jeans and a hat. Rube is talking intensely with wild arm gesticulations. Si listens with his hands deep inside the pockets of his jeans. His eyes are focused on the gravel path in front of him. They turn onto the street just inside the western boundary of the park. The tension from days earlier seems subsided. They walk along under the trees; a few still have their leaves. The air is clean after the morning's rain. Rube talks about the history of the park—a park that has been preserved practically unchanged for decades. Time does not affect this part of the city. It is a place meant to dislocate and a place of escape. They exit the park a few blocks up, at the western side of the park. The time is 09:51am.

Saturday, November 25. 02:27am

Personal notes by Holden: I did not feel too drunk. But it was cold and my teeth were chattering. I started walking toward the lagoon to see if the ducks were around or not. I must have been drunker than I thought because, even though I knew where it was, I could not find it. It kept getting darker and darker and spookier and spookier. Then, finally, I found it. I walked around the lagoon, but I did not see a single duck. Maybe they were just asleep near the edge of the water. I nearly fell in. Shivering like a bastard, I thought I would probably get pneumonia and die. I was thinking about the millions of jerks that would show up at my funeral and then my mind wondered of to the case of Rube and Si.² That is how I decided to head back home. No jerks would attend my funeral until this case was solved. I needed answers: was it possible to travel in time? And if so: would a park located in this city be the place to do so? I figured, a place not affected by time is, if any, a place containing multiple times.

On Tuesday, November 28th, at 9:45am, the phone rang for the third time that morning. No one would answer at Holden's apartment. At 8:30 that same morning, Holden had a scheduled meeting with one of the city's larger daily newspapers. He never showed up. He was reported as a missing person the morning after. The official report says, "Holden was last seen at the southeast exit of Central Park, around four in the morning, in a drunken and deranged condition."³ The witness was an old, sleep deprived woman who liked to take brisk walks in the park to clear her mind. At 4:36am she called the police and reported, "an unfortunate young man, possibly suicidal, is stumbling in a drunken condition around the lagoon. I tried to talk to him, but there was no use. When I asked for his name, I believe he answered: Holden."⁴ The police arrived to the scene half an hour later. Holden was nowhere

² J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, (Boston, Back Bay Books, 2001), 199-200.

³ * Officer Mark McLee, in official report dated November 28, 2010, New York State Police, New York City, New York, <http://www.unwrittenquarterly.com/nonexistentquote/holden.html> (fictitious quotations are marked with an asterix).

⁴ Ibid.

to be found, but next to a trashcan they found his notes of observations.

The circumstances surrounding the Holden case are still in the dark. This report will therefore not be about the specific case Holden was investigating, nor the case the police at this very moment are investigating. Instead, I will use this opportunity to shed some light onto the very idea that lies at the core of Holden's investigation, and how this can possibly explain his disappearance. The one concept that kept coming back in Holden's different reports was the idea of time travel. Pondering the reasons for his sudden disappearance, I suspect that Holden might have succeeded in his quest. Maybe it is not a crime that lies behind his disappearance? During many of our recorded conversations, Holden managed to convince me of some of his rather elaborate ideas.

Holden once informed me that histories from multiple times exist simultaneously. He told me that, actions are bound to the moment. He also told me that the future can be imagined as a past, and as a past it can be grasped as several alternatives. These are all existing futures that might or might not be fully experienced, and at certain moments they cross, join, or branch off in new directions. In a

relatively recent recording, he informed me: "we do not exist in the majority of these times; in some you exist, and not I; in others I, and not you; in others, both of us."⁵ That is how a single person exists in the past as well as in the future, or simultaneously in places widely separate from each other. He soon convinced me that anything can happen and that everything is possible. The universe does not have a single history. Rather, it has every possible history, each with its own probability. The concept of time is a theory. And he told me; a theory is just a set of rules that is made up in order to better understand the universe. Who then gets to decide which set of rules is more valid?⁶

His theories convinced me during our many in-depth conversations. But one thing I struggled to understand was how the concept of multiple times worked in actuality. I understood the idea of multiple times, but not the materiality of it. In an effort to comfort me, he told me that, even if I were to treat time as a straight line, it would be hard to rule out the possibility of errors in that timeline. What if the line had loops and branches, so that when moving forward you could eventually end up at one of the places you already visited? He

⁵ Jorge Luis Borges, "Garden of Forking Paths," *Labyrinths*, (New York, New Directions, 2007), 28.

⁶ Stephen Hawking, *A Briefer History of Time*, (New York, Bantam Dell, 2005), 13.

told me there is no absolute measure of time, and under certain circumstances, there is not even one absolute way of ordering events. At that moment I felt wiser. In retrospect, I am still as confused, yet I am convinced.⁷

I have, after much consideration, decided to read the disappearance of Holden as a sign of the validity of these concepts. One might call me naïve, even a bit crazy, but there are definitely some aspects of Holden's notes worth considering. After serious research, I have come to the conclusion that Holden was part of a governmental experiment involving time travel. I have been talking to Holden's girlfriend, and it is apparent that there are things she cannot tell me. Confusingly enough, she seemed more heartbroken than worried. I am quite sure he managed to find a way of traveling in time and possibly decided to stay there. I think that Holden exists in multiple histories. One in which he traveled back in history, and another in which the government decided that he knew too much and was taken away. Other possibilities do exist, but I haven't yet found any substantial arguments for them.

⁷ Ibid. 104-108.

BOOK REVIEW: AN ELABORATE COMPOSITE OF FACT AND IMAGINATION—NO BORDERS ARE LEFT UNTOUCHED IN THE COLLABORATIVE WRITING BY KILLIAN AND RÖDÉN

By Angela Vicario

Gallery Central Park is a story that takes place within the borders of Central Park, the Manhattan park designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux in the 1860s. The action is largely confined, almost as in a stage play, to one setting—to the park rangers hut in the northeast quadrant. Around the wooden table, rangers break for coffee and cigarettes, remarking on a recent string of occurrences. Drawings have been abandoned all over the park, left behind apparently by a female artist; Tim, the head ranger, has become obsessed by the artworks. The drawings are curious, intricately folded maquettes, inscribed with text taken from actual novels and stories set in Central Park. Tim is taken not only by the artwork, but also by the female artist who made them. The other rangers are by turns skeptical of the artwork and jealous of Tim's affectionate feeling toward their artist. The novel shows what happens when obsession invades the pastoral.

The characters in *Gallery Central Park* are involved in a circulating game of fiction turning on reality. The New York-based novelist Maureen Howard appears as a fictitious version of her own self, here as a vengeful old bat wandering the pathways of Central Park encountering her own characters. The young woman, obsessed by her own drawings, is evidently distracted by odd thoughts as she realizes that her own reality, as she perceives it, is nothing but an adventurous fiction novel yet to be written. When the paths of these two highly imaginative dreamers intersect, their lives turn even more surreal and ugly, as one attacks the other with a blowpipe loaded with poison from Indigenous South Americans. One soon realizes that the characters of the novel compose their own laws of nature. "Reality is nothing but a set of made-up rules. Who, then, gets to decide that I can't create my own?" the young woman utters as she, in a

police investigation, tries to plead her case.¹ She's accused of stalking the famous writer.

Not everything in this story works. As in any workplace comedy, there are perhaps too many characters, and few of the rangers are differentiated enough to make an impression. Later in the novel, as the story gets more complex and is about to turn on itself, the writing gets clear and strong. The peak of the novel lies in Maureen Howard's own description of the assault of which she believes herself to be a victim. Sitting on a camp chair inside the rangers hut, she guides the park rangers through her experience with the mysterious drawings containing quotes from her own novels.

As in most postmodern fiction, the center of the novel shifts with each event that carries it forward. The reader is invited to a house of mirrors with lives real and imagined, and there is no way of distinguishing the one from the other. Central Park turns into the set wherein fact and fiction become increasingly difficult to separate. In the end, the park is the only truly constant character in the

¹ * Kevin Killian and Ida Rödén, *Gallery Central Park*, (New York, Penguin Classics, 2011), www.unwrittenquarterly.com/nonexistentquote/bookreview/gallery-centralpark.com.

whole novel—a novel that is filled with strange, evocative, and surreal sensibilities. It is a pity that the two writers of *Gallery Central Park*, who recently perished in a terrible car crash in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, will not be allowed to further develop their talents. But death has a way of erasing artistic ambition. May they rest in peace.

THE COMPLEX CASE OF ARAKI YASUSADA

By Araki Yasunari

“We regret the publication of ‘Doubled Flowering: From the Notebooks of Araki Yasusada’ in our July/August issue. Neither ‘Araki Yasusada,’ nor the three names identified as translators (...) are actual persons. (...) All the materials came to us from Kent Johnson of Highland Community College in Freeport, Illinois, an actual person who represented himself as the close friend of the ill and incapacitated chief ‘translator.’”¹

In September 1980 I was going through the belongings of my deceased father, Araki Yasusada. One might wonder why I waited eight years to look through the evidence left by someone apparently close to me. But to say that we were on bad terms would be an understatement. He died after a long struggle with cancer, and the thought of attending his funeral did not cross my mind. I am not writing this to make any sort of confession or direct any kind of blame.

I got married four years ago, and it is thanks to my lovely and compassionate wife, Miriam, that I finally decided to go through the boxes stuffed away in my attic. A thick layer of dust, combined with old and new spider webs, covered the top boxes. Many of them contained nothing of monetary value or sentimental interest. There were old clothes and worn shoes. I picked through a couple of Japanese cookbooks and dated atlases. Others were filled up with dented aluminum pots and an odd blend of partly chipped china. All of which ended up in a huge pile that would go to the Goodwill. I had almost given up hopes of finding anything of interest when I came down to the lower row of boxes.

This is where the story about a father I never knew begins. I found in these last boxes fourteen spiral notebooks containing dozens of poems, drafts, and



PENGUIN CLASSICS

GALLERY CENTRAL PARK

KEVIN KILLIAN & IDA RÖDÉN

diary entries. The notebooks were interwoven with hundreds of insertions, including drawings and letters.² The moment I saw the books, I knew there was something of value in them. As I reached for the worn-out notebooks my heart rate rose, and I held them as if they could be dismantled by bare touch. They smelled of dust and old ink. Skimming through them, it did not take me long to realize that, even if he had been a bad influence in my life, my father was truly a great poet. Stories he never

told me were now revealed one after another—about my dead mother Nomura, my two sisters Akiko and Chieko, and stories about the bombing of Hiroshima. I started to understand that even though he had been a bad father, he was never a bad person. He just had a very complicated nature. And though he was not there for me as a child, I had now met him as the poet and the thinker. By reading his poems, he no longer treated me with silence, and for the first time I got to listen to his voice.

¹ Arthur Vogelsang, “Dear Editor,” *Boston Review – a Political and Literary Forum*, <http://www.bostonreview.net/BR22.3/Vogelsang.html>.

² Tosa Motokiyu, Ojii Norinaga, and Okura Kyojin (editors), *Double Flowering – From the Notebooks of Araki Yasusada*, (New York, Roof Books, 1997), 10.

December 25, 1945

Walking in the vegetable patch
late at night, I was startled to find
the severed head of my
mad daughter lying on the ground.

Her eyes were upturned, gazing at me, ecstatic-like ...

(From a distance it had appeared
to be a stone, haloed with light,
as if cast by the Big-Bang.)

What on earth are you doing, I said,
you look ridiculous.

Some boys buried me here,
she said sullenly.

Her dark hair, comet-like, trailed behind ...

Squatting, I pulled the
turnip up by the root³

For days I could not detach myself from the newfound material. I called in sick and just sat for hours looking through the notebooks. I soon understood that these findings were not just for me, and I decided to look for someone who might be interested in publishing the poetry of Araki Yasusada. It did not take long until my effort paid off. Throughout the early 1990s, several of my father's poems appeared in recognized journals all around the world. And in the July/August 1996 issue of *The American Poetry Review*, they decided to publish a special insert containing his poetry. We decided on the title *Double Flowering: From the Notebooks of Araki Yasusada*. For the first time I got to experience how it felt to be a proud son.

I started to get invitations to hold lectures. Even though this was truly difficult, and I had mixed feelings and was anxious talking about our common history, I was above all excited. Sadly, that only lasted for a couple of months. People have now started to speculate that the case of my father is a hoax. They are doing everything to prove that Araki Yasusada was actually a man named Kent Johnson, a young poet-professor at Highland Community College in Freeport, Illinois. When spoken about as a criminal act, it felt as if my world was collapsing around me.⁴ I would never try to deceive anyone. Whatever this is, and whatever one decides to believe, I must stress one important thing: this was never an egoistic gesture. I cannot see it as anything else but a profoundly selfless one. I cannot deny that some details in my father's story have been altered, but who longer knows what is true or not?

³ Ibid., 11.
In the aftermath of the bombing, many survivors moved into the foothills of the Chugoku mountains surrounding Hiroshima. This was the case with Araki Yasusada and his daughter.

⁴ Ibid., 130.
The ARP editor Arthur Vogelsang writes in the *Lingua Franca* that the work is in fact "a criminal act." In the *SUNY-Buffalo Poetics*, one of the editors says that the hoax callously ignores "the pain of millions of people ... in favour of personal gratification."



Photo: IR Archives

There is no such thing as a truthful witness or an accurate story. Empathy and memory can never be reduced to accuracies or inaccuracies of history, because both of these conditions are foremost cultivated by the imagination. But it all becomes part of our history and adds to its understanding. If definite answers are something to desire—if it is

ever possible to find them—just remember this one thing: Araki Yasusada will forever be part of the complex history that originates from the events of August 1945.

Araki Yasunari

ERN MALLEY—THE BLACK SWAN OF TRESPASS ON ALIEN WATERS

By Kafka Tamura



Photo: IR Archives

In the 1944 autumn issue of *Angry Penguins*, a new great poet was introduced to Australia. His name was Ern Malley. During his short lifetime he was never known as a poet, but mainly as the mechanic in Palmer's Garage on Taverner's Hill, Sydney. At the age of seventeen he moved to Melbourne, sold insurance, and lived all alone in a rented room.

The sister of the poet wrote that, "he was always a little strange and moody and I don't think he had a very happy life, though he didn't show it."¹ He died at the age of twenty-seven, on July 23rd, 1943, from Graves' Disease.² Not long after his death,

¹ Michael Heyward, *The Ern Malley Affair*, (London, Faber and Faber, 1993), 62-63.
² Graves' Disease is an autoimmune disorder, where the thyroid is overactive, producing an excessive amount of thyroid hormones. There is no cure for Graves'

his sister contacted *Angry Penguins*. She had found poems written by her brother, and a friend told her that they might be of value. The co-editor of the magazine, Max Harris, immediately saw potential in the poems. He read them over and over, and each time fell in love with them some more. He asked her to send everything she had.³ Harris knew that, in finding the poetry of Ern Malley, the history of Australian poetry had forever changed. Out of nowhere, he had stumbled upon a true genius. This was just what Australia needed in the conservatized cultural indifference of World War II—a dead hero.⁴ Harris informed the poet's sister that,

Your brother was one of the most remarkable and important poetic figures of this country. It may be rather hard for you to realize that Ern was, in my opinion, a great man, and in the opinion of many people a major poet (...) I have written a big survey of his work which I hope to publish as an introduction to his work in my journal before it is put out in book form.⁵

And so he did. In the introductory words of the autumn issue, Max Harris describes how the poetry of Ern Malley spans innumerable worlds, and though his vocabulary might be difficult, it emerges from pure spontaneity.⁶

Dürer: Innsbruck, 1495

I had often, cowed in the slumberous heavy air,
 Closed my inanimate lids to find it real,
 As I knew it would be, the colourful spires
 And painted roofs, the high snows glimpsed at
 the back,
 All reversed in the quiet reflecting waters —
 Not knowing then that Dürer perceived it too.
 Now I find that once more I have shrunk
 To an interloper, robber of dead men's dream,
 I had read in books that art is not easy
 But no one warned that the mind repeats
 In its ignorance the vision of others. I am still
 the black swan of trespass on alien waters.⁷

Who was the Australian poet Ern Malley? Well, from the beginning he was nothing but a staged prank, created by two restless soldiers and traditionalist poets, in order to teach a third poet a lesson. The victim of the hoax was one Max Harris, a young recognized poet, as well as the editor of *Angry Penguins*—a rebellious magazine with the quest to liberate Australian literature and art.

disease, but it is rarely life threatening. ("Graves' Disease," *National Endocrine and Metabolic Diseases Information Service*, <http://endocrine.niddk.nih.gov/pubs/graves/>).

³ "Ern Malley," *Ern Malley – the Official Website*, http://www.ernmalley.com/ern_malley.html.
⁴ Michael Heyward, *The Ern Malley Affair*, (London, Faber and Faber, 1993), xv.
⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.
⁶ *Ibid.*, 68.
⁷ "Malley Poetry," *Ern Malley – the Official Website*, http://www.ernmalley.com/malley_poetry.html.

This was during World War II, and *Angry Penguins*' bold approach to poetry was received with resistance. Lieutenant James McAuley and Corporal Harold Stewart, the two traditionalist poets, with much spare time while in the army, decided to teach Harris a lesson. By inventing a modernist poet, they hoped to bring down the *Angry Penguins*, a magazine they thought had reached new heights of pretension, and in doing so they intended to expose the whole idea of modernist poetry. Borrowing lines from diverse sources—the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, a *Collected Shakespeare*, or a dictionary of quotations—they created Malley's poems, all in one afternoon.⁸ By opening books at random, choosing words or phrases, they stitched together a collection of poems and gave it the title *The Darkening Ecliptic*. Later the two hoaxers wrote that they "deliberately perpetrated bad verse, and selected awkward rhymes from a *Ripman's Rhyming Dictionary*."⁹ To avoid the publishers contacting the poet, they said he died young. They invented a sister, Ethel Malley. She nursed her brother through his last illness, and she was the one to discover his poems. And the prank succeeded. In the 1944 autumn issue of *Angry Penguins*, Ern Malley was finally published.¹⁰

When McAuley went on a work-related trip to New Guinea, Stewart told his friend Tess van Sommers about the hoax. She swore never to tell a soul. But she was a journalist, too amazed by the story to let it go. Everything broke loose. For the first time in Australian history, poetry became front-page news, and Ern Malley was translated into immortality. This was before Roland Barthes came up with the idea of the "death of the author." In his essay "The Death of the Author," Barthes argues that in literature the meaning of the work comes into existence through the act of reading. This was traditionally attributed to the author's biography and intent, but Barthes turned this notion around and said that, in the hands of the reader, a text can go anywhere. For this to happen, the death of the author is necessary. Barthes writes, "to give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing."¹¹ Barthes ends his essay by writing that a text is made of multiple writings, none of which can be considered original. The text is always quotations.¹² And that is exactly what the poetry of Ern Malley is: a series of quotations without an original. Interestingly enough, the poem "Dürer: Innsbruck" is all about the realization that one's vision is sec-

ond-hand and that the world one creates is in fact a work of art, created by someone else. But in the mid-forties these thoughts about authorship were far from developed, and the importance of the author prevailed. Harris was fooled, as he was made to believe in a poet who never existed. He did so publicly and was met with mockery from all sides.¹³

After the hoax was revealed, McAuley and Stewart said that there was no literary merit to the poems. The sole aim of the poetry was to make its admirers look idiotic. Harris, on his side, did not budge. He argued that the two poets had, by inventing Ern Malley, written their only poetry of real genius. The persona they created had liberated them. One might suspect that the hoaxers actually tried to write well and then denied it in order to play a trick on Harris. The hoax shows us that the value of poetry depends not just on what is said, but even more so, by whom. For sure, neither McAuley nor Stewart will be names as great as their own myth. The irony of it all lies in the fact that the two poets were conservatives trying to resist change. In creating the modernist poet, they actually generated change, and in doing so they highlighted aspects of themselves they apparently despised.¹⁴ "I still believe in Ern Malley," Harris wrote years later. "I know that Ern Malley was not a real person, but a personality invented in order to hoax me. I was offered not only the poems of this mythical Ern Malley, but also his life, his ideas, his love, his disease, and his death."¹⁵ Harris reasoned that whether or not it was a hoax is not relevant, but that the quality of the literature within the hoax is. For Harris, Ern Malley embodied the true sorrow of our time—the lonely stranger always misunderstood and vulnerable. In the streets of each city there walks an Ern Malley, a living per-

son on his own, an outsider without the protection against the world. "And I believe he really walked down Princess Street somewhere in Melbourne."¹⁶

Ern Malley is many contradictory things. First of all, there never existed a poet named Ern Malley—he was never born. At the same time, there was a poet called Ern Malley, one can read his poems and quite easily imagine him walking down Princess Street. The fact that he never existed has not damaged his popularity; rather it is the contrary. When McAuley and Stewart said that there was no literary merit in the poetry of Ern Malley, they were wrong. This demonstrates how forceful the impact of fiction can be on the people who believe in it. It demonstrates how they think of themselves, and how they live their lives and make art under the influence of this fiction. Malley cannot therefore be reduced to a sequence of poems. Since knowledge about the external circumstances of this case is necessary, one can argue that this goes against Barthes's theory of "the death of the author." At the same time it goes hand in hand with the concept—the author is, and was always, dead. On the same note, the text supersedes the author and should be seen as "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash."¹⁷ There is no *one* Ern Malley, but several. And each contradicts one another and helps to create the intense quality of the character. The fake poet is by far more interesting than the poet Harris once thought real. Ern Malley invaded the actual world in a way that only a few writers can. His art is still dissected into pieces, in a way few writers' have ever been dissected. Regardless of the hoaxers' intentions, they did in fact create effective modernist art.¹⁸



Photo: IR Archives

8 John McDonald, "The Eternal Ern," *Quadrant Online*, Volume LIII Number 6, <http://www.quadrant.org.au/magazine/issue/2009/6/the-eternal-ern>.
9 Michael Heyward, *The Ern Malley Affair*, (London, Faber and Faber, 1993), 138.

10 "Angry Penguins," *Ern Malley – the Official Website*, http://www.ernmalley.com/angry_penguins.html.

11 Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Image-Music-Text*, (New York, Hill and Wang, 1978), 147.

12 *Ibid.*, 142-148.

13 "The Expose," *Ern Malley – the Official Website*, http://www.ernmalley.com/the_expose.html.

14 *Ibid.*

15 Michael Heyward, *The Ern Malley Affair*, (London, Faber and Faber, 1993), 218.

16 *Ibid.*, 219.

17 Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Image-Music-Text*, (New York, Hill and Wang, 1978), 146.

18 "Ern Malley Recent," *Ern Malley – the Official Website*, http://www.ernmalley.com/ern_malley_recent.html.

PETER AARON, A LITERARY VOICE OF AMERICA, DIES AT 72

By Julian Carax



Photo: IR Archives

Peter Aaron, the novelist and short-story writer, died on Wednesday in Berkeley, California. He was seventy-two-years-old, and one of the most important voices in modern American fiction.

Few writers have managed to do what Peter Aaron did after he entered the literary stage in 1952. In his many novels and short stories, he illustrates a universe where fact and fabrication becomes impossible to separate. He addressed existential issues and questions of identity, time, language and literature. In a 1996 radio interview at the National Public Radio, Peter Aaron informed us that, “writing becomes a way to reflect over one’s life, and by inventing stories I manage to keep my ghosts at bay. Through the process of writing I am confronted by the futility of my own existence.”¹ Peter Aaron believed in the self as a spectrum. He did not believe in an authentic self, and saw it as a foolish act to search for one. In an interview for *The New Yorker*, Amanda Bloom asked why he decided to write fiction. Peter Aaron answered, “I do not know who I am or why I do what I do. If I did know, I probably wouldn’t feel the need to do it.”² His stories examine not reality, but existence, and in his writing one is confronted by unrealized possibilities. Whether or not that possibility becomes a reality, is secondary. “He was the most interesting and involved writers of the twentieth century,” the novelist Kari Sandrew said in an interview for his obituary. “Peter would never write anything he did not believe to be possible, and stayed forever loyal to the story. He was neither historian nor prophet: he was an explorer of existence. He will be missed by generations of readers and writers.”³

Peter Aaron grew up on the East Coast, where he spent most of his youth. Although his writing was not fully developed until his late thirties, he was published already in his early twenties. At the age of twenty-six he traveled to France, where he stayed for five years. After his time abroad he returned to New York. He met his wife Iris, with whom he had two children, David and Lillian. They stayed in New York until their youngest turned three, after which they decided to move to a more relaxed San Francisco, California. The last fifteen years of his life was spent in Berkeley, California. Here he had a part time professorship at the University of California Berkeley, teaching literature. During his active life as a writer he received many prizes, one of them the National Book Critics Circle prize for the year’s best work of fiction.

During his last years, Peter Aaron struggled with terminal cancer. The cause was glioblastoma, an aggressive brain cancer. The cancer was detected in 2008. When a brain scan revealed a new tumor, in the summer of 2010, they told him he only had months to live. Peter Aaron stopped aggressive medical treatment and returned to his fiction writing. He began writing a short-story. Even though the story was never finished he felt he had a mission and it probably added a few more weeks to his life. Peter Aaron died peacefully surrounded by his immediate family. A memorial service will be held at Bayview Chapel in Berkeley, California at 11:00am on Saturday, March 19. In lieu of flowers, the family is asking that donations be made directly to the American Cancer Society.

MARY ANN SINGLETON, TELEVISION REPORTER AND TALK SHOW HOSTESS, DIES AT 65

By Julian Carax

Mary Ann Singleton, known by many as the wittiest, satirical talk show hostess of the ‘90s, died on Saturday morning in San Francisco, California. She was sixty-five-years-old.

She was born on August 24, 1951 in Cleveland, Ohio. At the age of twenty-five, as a naïve and innocent Midwesterner, Mary Ann Singleton moved from Cleveland to live an adventurous life in San Francisco. There she worked a couple of years at Halcyon Communications and met Brian, her future husband and the father of her child. She clawed her way up the corporate ladder from secretary to afternoon television hostess, then



Photo: IR Archives

from a reporter to hosting her own talk show. The television show *Mary Ann in the Morning*, played well in California, but fizzled in New York. Even so, she decided to leave San Francisco for New York to pursue her dream, where she stayed and achieved fame and fortune. Caught up in a life as a celebrity, the unexpected news about her cancer came as a shock. After twenty years in the big city, Mary Ann Singleton decided to return to her daughter in San Francisco. She underwent a successful operation and the doctors assured her that the cancer was out of her body. With a different perspective on life she made a last appearance as a public persona in the television show *Who’s Elizabeth Bennett?*. The show never received any recognition and only ran for one season.

Mary Ann Singleton disappeared from the limelight. Two years after the operation, doctors found a new growth— an astrocytoma, a seven-inch malignant tumor, had wrapped itself around her spinal column just below the neck. She underwent a new operation and aggressive radiation therapy that left her paralyzed from the waist down. She never recovered from the operation. Her condition deteriorated and she was seldom seen in public. In hospice she died two months later, in the presence of her daughter and close friends.

Mary Ann Singleton was never able to wholly experience the fame we ascribe her today. Not even a year ago, decades after its last airing, *Who’s Elizabeth Bennett?* became a hot topic within intellectual circles. The show was mentioned in a *Conan O’Brien* airing, and became known as the most intelligent show ever created. In the show, Mary Ann Singleton invited different fiction writers and had them act as one of their invented characters. The slogan of the show became “Living in a real unreal world,” and it showed the writers creation and that creation’s struggle to become real and alive. Even though the critics argued that the approach was “naïve and too concrete for such a vague statement,” the show gave an example on how the creation of the imagination

¹ * Peter Aaron, “Portrait: Peter Aaron,” *National Public Radio*, (May 1996), <http://www.unwrittenquarterly.com/nonexistentquote/obituary/aaron.html>.

² * Amanda Bloom, “Interview with Peter Aaron,” *The New Yorker* (February 2011), <http://www.unwrittenquarterly.com/nonexistentquote/obituary/aaron.html>.

³ * Kari Sandrew, notes from interview (March 2011), <http://www.unwrittenquarterly.com/nonexistentquote/obituary/aaron.html>.

exists right among us.⁴ In an interview for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the last she ever gave, Mary Ann Singleton said that the creative process is never simple, “what is real and what is not is just a question of perception. In reading a novel you identify with the characters to such an extent that you end up sharing their thoughts and feelings. You feel emotions the way they would.”⁵

Immediate family and close friends will be gathering March 12, at 11am at Cypress Lawn Memorial Park—Newall Chapel in Colma California.

IDA RÖDÉN, MANIPULATOR OF IMAGES AND WORDS, DIES AT 42

By Julian Carax



Photo: IR Archives

Ida Röden, the writer and artist who we know as the fabricator of diverse and multiplying realities, died on Monday in San Francisco, California. She was forty-two-years-old.

Ida Röden was born in Härnösand, a small town in northern Sweden. Her father worked as a computer salesman; her mother was a teacher for children with special needs. Early in life she met her future husband, and art collaborator, Jens Andersson. At the age of eighteen she moved to the university city of Uppsala, where she pursued an education within the history of arts. Six years later, she moved back up north, where she received her undergraduate diploma in Fine Arts at the Umeå Arts Academy. At this point the couple had already started their collaborative art projects, where they combined an artistic exploration with a deep knowledge in interactive technologies. After graduation, the couple moved to San Francisco, California. Ida Röden enrolled in the graduate program in Fine Arts at California College of the Arts, where she worked

closely with the poet and writer Kevin Killian. Their long collaborative project was finalized five years later, and the wait was worthwhile. In somber, humoristic yet subtle narratives, the novel *Gallery Central Park* presents a world filled with characters that border on caricature, yet their struggles are heartfelt and complex. In a book review for *The New Yorker*, Margaret Moore writes, “we can take the story apart, we can find out how one part responds to the other. But there’s always some sections that can neither be defined, nor dismissed, but it is likewise there, and it is there to hold the story together.”⁶

Even though she enjoyed collaboratively working with other artists, Ida Röden’s most reliable partners were always the many versions of herself. The artworks she is most celebrated for are the pieces in which she challenges the notion of her own authorship and the notion of reality. In conjunction with her graduation at the California College of the Arts, she published a magazine that presented these issues for contemplation and questioning. The publication was highly recognized and turned into periodical. The core idea always stayed the same; she could be all of the authors in the magazine, as well as none of them. Rumor has it that she ensured that the magazine would continue to be published even after her death. “Ida Röden, strictly speaking, does not exist,” claims Mara Thompson in a *New York Times* article. “She is several, is many, she is a profusion of selves. She splits herself into dozens of characters who recurrently contradict each other and even themselves. In doing so, she removes herself from her own persona. In the process she may lose herself, but what she really gains is the possibility of becoming anyone.”⁷

In her work, she manipulates images and texts to obscure the difference between documentation and fiction. The evidence of its own inaccuracy is usually integrated in all of her work, and the result is obviously constructed pieces that appear both awkward and familiar. In an article for *Artforum*, Noel Stark writes, “few artists have poked more holes in conventional notions of reality than Ida Röden. Other artists have explored what has come to be known as ‘magical realism,’ but most of them have set their visionary tales in situations where myth and folklore loom. Röden, on the other hand, discovers her stories in the midst of the hustle and bustle of contemporary urban life. She mesmerizes us by working her manipulation and deception in places where reality seem to be rock solid. The result

is a body of work that defies the laws of physics, as well as the rules of conventional narrative fiction.”⁸

After three years in San Francisco, Ida Röden moved with her husband to Berlin, where they began an extensive project “In every life there’s a life just like mine.” The project, has at its core, a community of writers and artists who work together to meticulously separate each writer’s fictional characters from their original sources. The characters are later classified into an archive to expand and borrow from. If a character started off as a pure description from a novel, that same character soon turned into a whole portfolio, filled with documents indicating a life existing beyond that of the original story. The archive became widely known and used in various ways. Ida Röden and her husband used the archive for their popular, and never ending story, “The Life of Mr. Brown.” This is one of a few projects that manage to incorporate crowd sourcing in a forceful and convincing way. The setup is simple; it starts as a single narrative with one character, the protagonist Carl Brown. As the story starts to build, and is about to introduce additional characters, it hits a crossroad, and it is up to the reader to decide what route to take, and what character to introduce. In this way the story keeps branching off without the control of any writer or reader. The project soon took on its own life and after six years in Berlin, Ida Röden and her husband once again made San Francisco their home base.

Ida Röden became a widely known name within the art and literary scene. Her photographic and interactive works are in the collection of many museums, including the Museum of Modern Art, The Guggenheim, Neue National Gallerie, and Moderna Museet in Stockholm. She was the Hasselblad Award Winner and received the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship. Her literary work has received The PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction and she was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

On a weekend drive through Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, Ida Röden and her writing partner Kevin Killian died immediately when their car collided with a passing car. Her survivors include her husband Jens, their children Kim and Irja, as well as her parents and siblings. A private burial service will be held in Härnösand, Sweden next Friday. There will be a memorial service in San Francisco later this spring. Those wishing to make donations in Ida Röden’s memory may do so to the charity of their choice.

4 * Lucy Cartwright, “Who’s Elizabeth Bennett?,” *The San Francisco Chronicle*, (February 2009), <http://www.unwrittenquarterly.com/nonexistentquote/obituary/singleton.html>.

5 * Steve Brown, “Mary Ann Singleton – her life’s achievements,” *The San Francisco Chronicle*, (November 2010), <http://www.unwrittenquarterly.com/nonexistentquote/obituary/singleton.html>.

6 * Margaret Moore, “Gallery Central Park,” *The New Yorker*, (February 2011), <http://www.unwrittenquarterly.com/nonexistentquote/obituary/roden.html>.

7 * Mara Thompson, “Ida Röden’s many faces,” *New York Times*, (December 2010), <http://www.unwrittenquarterly.com/nonexistentquote/obituary/roden.html>.

8 * Noel Stark, “Unconventional storytelling in the Art of Ida Röden,” *Art Forum*, (April 2010), <http://www.unwrittenquarterly.com/nonexistentquote/obituary/roden.html>.

