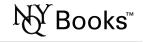
THE CARTOGRAPHER'S INK

Okla Elliott



The New York Quarterly Foundation, Inc. New York, New York NYQ Books[™] is an imprint of The New York Quarterly Foundation, Inc.

The New York Quarterly Foundation, Inc. P. O. Box 2015 Old Chelsea Station New York, NY 10113

www.nyq.org

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First Edition

Set in Book Antiqua

Layout and design by David Bowen

Cover image elements provided by and modified with permission from Struckdumb Graphics and naumoid/Bigstock.com

Author photo by Robert MacCready

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014945804

ISBN: 978-1-63045-010-6

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Birmingham Poetry Review: "Humbaba Clothed in Seven Cloaks"; "Tilting Toward Winter"

BLIP: Mississippi Review Online: "Lonely in Seoul"

Coe Review: "Emerging from Clouds"

Connotations Press: "Visiting Lenin's Tomb"

Contrary Magazine: "Alien War, Human War"

Del Sol Review: "The Parable of the Worm in the Apple"; "Shibboleth, Beginning and Ending with Lines from Kim Ch'un Su"

Fourth River: "Learning Russian"; "The Philosophy Student"

Fourth River: Best of the First Ten Years: "The Philosophy Student"

Freshwater: "What a Vulgar Moon"

Great Lakes Review: "The Artificial Suns of Milwaukee"

International Poetry Review: "A Hot Minute"; "Helpless"

The Laurel Review: "Pointless Movement"

The Literary Review: "That the Soul Discharges Her Passions Upon False Objects"

The Louisville Review: "Blackened"; "Nikola Tesla Dreams of a Death Ray Powered by the Forgotten Hopes of Angels"

The Los Angeles Review: "Wishing on a Shooting Star My Friend Informs Me Is Likely Just a Satellite"

Nashville Review: "Think of a House"

New York Quarterly: "How It Ended"; "The Man Who Named Bees"

Oyez Review: "Mannheim, Germany, Phone Booth in the Turkish District"

roger: a journal of the arts and literature: "Reading Kierkegaard Near the St. Louis Arch"; "Near the Ocean"; "The Light Here"; "Yardwork for my Dying Mother"

South Dakota Review: "The Unhappy Theatre"; "Wolf-Sense Sonnet"

The Southeast Review: "The Inside Bird"

Thin Air: "The Idiot's Faith"

Subtropics: "The Patience of the Landmine" (and reprinted as part of *Virginia Quarterly Review*'s InstaPoetry Series)

Zone 3: "On Perfection"

The following poems appeared in the limited edition chapbook *A Vulgar Geography* (MSR Press, 2011): "On Perfection"; "The Idiot's Faith"; "Near the Ocean"; "The Light Here"; "How It Ended"; "The Man Who Named Bees"; "Learning Russian"; "The Philosophy Student"; "Emerging from Clouds"; "Yardwork for my Dying Mother"; "Shibboleth, Beginning and Ending with Lines from Kim Ch'un-Su"; and the following poems appeared in the limited edition chapbook *Lucid Bodies and Other Poems* (MSR Press, 2006): "Lucid Bodies"; "What a Vulgar Moon."

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WOLF-SENSE SONNET

I will walk you through the desert, all wolfwolf and blood-sandy paws. O smooth rapture of elegant neck – O underwear hanging on comic cactus – water-plant, prick-plant of need. I will lead you through strange danger, one million nights of apocalyptic lust. Gone giddy, I'll lick lasciviously your Lilith lips, lunge, leap, and lie back down.

What am I saying? All sense has left me. There's a zero at the bottom of this pit. There's a note of desert music in us. There's no need of sense, only our senses.

You will walk me wolfily into new need, and our oasic images will mirror-mirage.

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THIS BOTHERSOME BIRD

Through the raw dawn through the moist forest our freezing gestures form.

A sunken light impoverishes our Being-in-the-world. But I linger, a slight gray bird fluttering, chirp-chirping at each flittering thought.

What would you do with me, this bothersome bird? The silent firmament is torn by my song. From my clouded tower, I survey the horizons of existence and nonexistence.

You show me your nascent tenderness. We teach each other the rudiments of human kindness, my need feeding your need to be needed.

Perch, please, with me on the edge of an apocalypse. Let us open our gray wings and prepare our flight, two gray things disappearing into the gray-lighted distance.

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NIKOLA TESLA'S DREAM OF A DEATH RAY Powered by the Forgotten Wishes of Angels

He worked alone with X-rays, hour on hour, forgot to sleep for days and then collapsed. 10,000 planes flew mute and languid through pink Serbian clouds. A black ray swept across their path, and they vanished as souls floated Northwest toward oblivion. The angels laughed at Tesla lying cold. His want to wake was strange, he thought, in dream lucid as if he had consumed two pots of strong tea rapidly. This new invention would dog him, just now when he had no time for death rays. What would power it?, he wondered, as he swam the pond behind his father's parish where he preached a god so strange as to conceive of matter, force, currents, gravity, and microwaves. Wishes of angels. This would be the power source for his death ray. Forgotten ones, the most deadly.

He woke

and lifted himself.

Saliva stuck

to his dry lips.

He cringed, remembering

angels, and dipped his hands and dunked his head

into the washbasin.

Drops scudded down

his spine –

as he saw planes in flames, smelled death.

[64]

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WHAT LONELY CONTINENTS

Last night I dreamt of Africa it was beautiful and strange but you weren't there and that made things more difficult even in the unreality of dream made me think Africa really is a desolate place worthy of all our pity how could a continent survive without you I thought and realized Europe suffered the same poverty of you and so was no better than Africa which at least made me happy not to be dreaming I was in Europe but no happier I was dreaming of Africa where the lions yawned with regal indifference the gazelles ran languid with fear and slower than in real life they were sad not to have you there and ran slower thinking maybe you couldn't catch up that's why you weren't but they were just dumb gazelles hoping against reason that you wanted to be but just couldn't which is bullshit as you and I both know try telling that to those stupid gazelles though they won't listen to a word just run lazily along hoping you'll arrive just in time to save them.