

SMOKE DETECTOR

Andrew James Paterson 2019-2020

He had to get out of town.

He had to get out of Toronto. Not only was his rent going to increase yet again but other factors were seriously getting on his nerves.

People whom he'd thought dead or at least relocated had been coming out of the woodwork. These individuals had been requesting social media friendships, and that meant personal contact.

He was ninety-nine percent certain that he had seen a former nemesis at a distance in a crowded shopping mall.

He felt more than ever that his time in Toronto was limited.

He had to get away, as soon as possible. He was in a position to pay off his credit card and then start again. Clean slates had always been helpful.

But where could he go and possibly move to. He had practical limitations...he could speak paltry German and paltry French. He had dietary restrictions.

Would he be able to work anywhere else? Would that be necessary? He did have some residuals, although nothing lucrative.

He would have to go somewhere where he had no history. Montreal, Vancouver and New York were out of the question. Los Angeles was also out of the question since he had never been a driver.

Where? And how soon?

He contacted his friend Murray in Berlin. He would buy a two way ticket and sell the return to Murray, who needed to return to Canada for health access reasons.

A year and a bit ago he had visited Berlin and thought he might be able to live there if he had some income. Well, old age benefits had by now kicked in plus some other unexpected government money. So he decided to start out in Berlin.

He had stayed in a hostel and he could return to it until hopefully finding alternative accommodation. Of course the place catered mostly to younger transients and thus he had to be careful with his valuables, but this arrangement was workable. He would spend my time walking and looking at art.... Berlin is a great walking city with a solid public transportation system.

He booked a flight that would stop in Reykjavik for a plane change. He was actually curious about Reykjavik but not for the winter. Berlin had become almost familiar during his recent two weeks in the city. He knew people there but only a few that he felt like seeing. He could think of three people who he actually would socialize with if he were to bump into them. He knew one person living there who he completely detested but he knew he could avoid the asshole. Berlin is much larger than Toronto. He could be anonymous, which was the idea.

He decided that he would not bring my phone. Of course he would bring his laptop. He was looking forward to spending time in my personal version of café society.

He checked into the Happy Hostel and ate generic German food at the nearby restaurant called Neumann's. He realized that was where he could get a seven Euro breakfast while staying at Happy Hostel. The manager seemed rather grumpy.

An hour later he was in bed and he slept like a log. The next day after breakfast he decided he should make contact with Motto Books in Kreuzberg as he had arranged a reading there for early in the evening. He would be reading from his novellette *Morrissey Masala*, which he had brought some copies of on the flight. Alex, the proprietor, knew his writing so he had offered me a reading and signing event even though *Morrissey Masala* wasn't really an art book. It wasn't exactly literary either, so perhaps therefore it was an art book.

He bought a one day transit fare and met with Alex, who was quite friendly. Then he had five hours to kill time by visiting galleries. But first he paid a visit to Checkpoint Charlie, which had long become a prime tourist trap. One could help oneself to a smidgen piece of The Wall and also steal a couple of postcards...there was surely no need to pay an entrance fee in order to take in the Checkpoint Charlie Museum. Here a museum, there a museum. Berlin had a lot of serious museums. Well, the city had a lot of history, so....

It wasn't far from Checkpoint Charlie to the Jewish Museum, where the American light artist James Turrell was showing. He had a strong like/dislike with Turrell. He loved Turrell's pure colour and he was suspicious of his precious mysticism, although he himself was a closeted mystic. At the Jewish Museum he ran into two Toronto artists. Just visiting. He was just visiting, although he had no idea when or if he would be returning. He emailed his friend Murray in order to set up a meeting so that he could sell him my return ticket.

The *Morrissey Mandala* reading went well. A couple of friends of friends came and everybody went out for drinks at a weird Russian bar in Kreuzberg. Nobody asked him why Morrissey, for which he was grateful. He used to be quite keen on Morrissey even though it was clear that the Mancunian singer was provincial and protectionist. Over the last few years it had become clear clear that he was much worse: protectionist meaning racist xenophobic on top of being a major closet case. Well, some of that is in *Morrissey Masala*, although in many ways the former Smiths singer is a red herring as the book is primarily about the hysterical omnipresence of social media.

One of the friends of friends gave him contact information. he agreed to meet Murray the next Tuesday at some expended film event at Die Volksbuhne, a former people's theatre in what used to be the east.

He went to be early, had his breakfast at Neumann's, cleaned his teeth and took a bus to the Haupt Bahnhof. From there he found the appropriate subway line.

He started his daily gallery hopping at a small gallery not far from where he'd left off the previous day. He buzzed the gallery which was one which did not let in every single walk-in who wished to see the art. He was specifically interested in the works by Ruth Wolfe-Rehfeld, who had worked with *poetrie concrete* until 1989 - the year the Berlin Wall finally came down.

Wolfe-Rehfeld 's exhibition consisted of many different but beautiful approaches to concrete poetry. He struck up a dialogue with the docent, who informed him that the artist and her husband used concrete poetry to clandestinely speak to each other and then also to their friends in the West. So Ruth Wolfe Rehfeld was using concrete poetry to communicate in codes. This fascinated him, as his own attraction to concrete poetry was more about *not* communicating. It was about removing words and language from a need to communicate or convey 'meaning'. So little did he know about how others had been forced to live, he once again had to remind himself.

He took a short underground to Postdamerstrasse, on which he found a courtyard of galleries. Now he found himself staring at sparse and even stark art works by Herbert Zangs This artist, who refused labels such as *arte povera* but who certainly anticipated it as well as minimalism, worked with found materials especially plywood and cardboard. Zangs was obsessed with grids. Zangs eschewed systems but of course was obsessed with grids. This obscure and quietly resourceful artist was obsessed with mathematics and its symbols. Disorder and order of course have long enjoyed a symbiotic relationship.

He then walked along Potsdamerstrasse but most of what he stumbled upon was far less interesting than Zanga and Wolfe-Rehfeld. And now he was hungry. Near the subway there was a cheap Thai restaurant which was convenient and actually quite good. He made plans for the next day...he would visit the Haus den Kultur der Weld and appraise an exhibition titled A Most Dangerous Game, surveying art by the Situationist Internationale. What on earth might be on these particular walls, he wondered as he walked down the many stairwells leading to his train.

After checking in at Motto Books he decided to postpone his visit to the Situationist art show at House of World Culture. There was now a panel scheduled for a later date so why not kill two birds with one stone, He thought about Situationsim a great deal and his thoughts were very mixed. He thought that The SI's critique of art was so thorough that it left no space and no alternatives for making and exhibiting art. All art is part of the spectacle et cetera. So, then what?

One more copy of *Morrissey Masala* had been shown. That left eight copies which his Canadian publisher had already sold to Motto via PayPal. Eventually he would be receiving a fragment of that and other small amounts of money.

He decided to take a day off from art, . nature being excluded. He decided to visit the Berlin Zoo.. he'd half promised his friend Ron in Toronto that he would do so despite vowing to never patronize Toronto's big zoo again. Yet here we was, en route to a tourist site where he could walk around and stare at a bunch of captive animals.

At the entrance there was a sign pronouncing that Feline Predators would not be on display for the next few months as their abode was being reconstructed. Their abode? What the hell? The apology note continued to inform visitors that the feline predators were soon to be showcased in a larger display area permitting plains for lions, jungles for tigers, trees for leopards, and much more. He wondered where the beasts would be housed in the meantime...presumably somewhere where they would not all kill each other simply because there wasn't really anything else for them to do.

He also thought 'feline predators' was unintentionally comical. Of course there are other predators in the animal kingdom but weren't all felines predators?

He had 'owned' one cat during his lifetime and his 'pet' had routinely brought him mousey presents. Was essentialism really the difference between animals and humans?

Nevertheless, now he had to kill an afternoon so he paid admission fee to the zoo so he could look at other beasts as well as smaller animals who were not feline predators. There was a well sculpted elephant display and a captivating polar bear enclave. He liked his animals big and deadly. Except the big deadly animals were often the smelliest. He decided to grab a big dinner before returning to the hostel.

Before calling it a night he decided to check his email as he hadn't done so since arriving in Berlin. There were no urgent messages. The editor of some alternative press book about Toronto music wanted to interview him about his band from four decades ago. He yawned and then replied that he was out of the country indefinitely but that he could answer whatever questions via email.

On the next day he realized many galleries would be closed but also that the film museum would be open. Thus he decided today would be a good day to spend at the film museum.

The museum was huge and full of German cinematic history. A considerable amount of space was devoted to German directors and actors who had emigrated to America in order to escape the Nazis. Fritz Lang was of course the most famous of these directors but there were others. He hoped to find more material on Robert Siodmak than was present in the museum. So many of the Germans relocating to

Hollywood worked on what was categorized as *film noir*, which retained aspects of German expressionism like high contrast lighting and extensive use of shadows. Siodmak was for him the quintessential noir director even more than Lang. Siodmak's film *Phantom Lady* was a particular favourite. It was adapted from a novel by the American thriller writer Cornell Woolrich who also wrote the short story that Hitchcock novelized into *Rear Window*.

When the film museum's time-line inched toward the later twentieth century he above all wanted to see a section on Fassbinder. Alas, Fassbinder was just another director for the New German cinema...along with Wim Wenders and Werner Herzog among others. He had been quite obsessed with Fassbinder around the time of the director's early death in 1982. Fassbinder's best films combined outrageous melodrama with brutal social realism. But now perhaps this great director was an embarrassment.

He managed to introduce himself to the director of the Arsenal Institute of Film Distribution whose name was either Ulrich or Erich. The man was friendly and it turned out that he and Arsenal's director knew many of the same people in Toronto. They chatted amicably until he had trouble biting his tongue with regards to how little he cared about a certain Toronto director who had always seemed to be a little boy in a big hurry.

Erich or was it Ulrich offered him a complimentary ticket for an early evening programme which was mostly projected on video and mostly quite dull. Some of the upcoming programming appeared to be more interesting so perhaps he would revisit the Arsenal Cinema at a later date.

He had to wait at Die Volksbuhne for about half an hour before Murray materialized. Murray had brought along his friend whose name was Karen.

They watched and listened as various experimental films by a deceased filmmaker were projected onto different walls of the theatre. There were two musicians... one playing guitar and one a cheap synthesizer. Their music was not particularly connected to the films, which were not of significant interest. The music was weird surf music not unlike Martin Denny. Anti-rock'n'roll, not quite right MOR. He didn't mind the music.

But now he realized that the synthesizer player, who called himself Heinrich Gesundheit, was really Henry Somebody who he recalled from about three decades ago in Toronto. Henry Somebody had accompanied an old friend of his who was an opera singer who intentionally butchered showtunes. Henry Somebody hung out at a local bike shop cum cinema frequented by the creep who operated what seemed to be a cult Indian restaurant in Berlin.

He decided he had to exit Die Volksbuhne before Henry Somebody finished his set and recognized him. It was quite easy to persuade Murray and Karen to relocate somewhere else where they could actually have pints and talk.

In the pub around the corner he remembered to give Murray the return ticket and collect payment before he forgot. The price of the return ticket was already seeming useful.

Murray had to return to Canada as Canadian health benefits were likely to soon be necessary. Murray had just turned fifty.

Karen and her girlfriend Elisabeth were managing a small performance and media art place. Karen and Murray suggested he might apply to do a performance not immediately but soon....perhaps the next spring. He said he'd consider it and then remarked that he hadn't really done performance for a long time. Karen smiled and said that she and Elisabeth were not purists about what is and what isn't performance. He smiled gratefully as performance art purists annoyed him immensely.

They sipped on their pints and chattered about Brexit. They all agreed that the global politic had been reduced to a choice between neo-liberalism and racist protectionism. Neo-liberalism was now the lesser of two evils. Not only in the EU and not only in Canada let alone the United States. And meanwhile what was going on in the rest of the world. War and then more war. They grunted and then toasted each other.

The waiter interrupted the conversation to ask if anyone at the table wanted another pint. Nobody did, so they finished their current pints and then called it a night. He told Murray to tell select Toronto people that they had met up in Berlin but not to tell just anybody. Murray understood without needing to pry further. Then the three of them split off in separate directions. He said goodbye to Rosa Luxembourg Square and the frontal view of Die Volksbuhne.

He allotted himself a couple of hours to tour the Hamburger Bahnhof, yet another of Berlin's big museums. Specifically he spent time with Josef Beuys' installation A Place Called Space.

Beuys was interested in creating his own new concept of capital which he developed in relation to Karl Marx. He explained how he was no longer using the term to refer to economic ownership but rather to intellectual and creative property. Beuys therefore equates art, as an exemplary expression of creative power (art - creativity), with capital (art= capital).

a-place-called-space.blogspot.com 2017/10)

He had always taken Beuys with a grain of salt. An older artist friend thought Beuys was the bee's knees, while being aware of the artist's hubris and self-mythologization. Other art acquaintances loathed the man and his aura.. had he ever truly repented for once having been a Nazi? Some thought yes and some insisted no.

He stared at Beuys' absent piano and empty film reels and then exited Hamburger Bahnhof. He needed to eat and the Haupt Bahnhof across the road did not offer anything but snacks so he once again patronized the Indian restaurant down the street from Happy Hostel.

He almost chanted to himself while waiting for his curry.

Brexit. Hex-it-Flex-it Flex those muscles gym boy gym girl picking up angel boy shouting lager lager lager shouting lager lager shouting mega mega Brexit pex it...

He remembered when he was a little boy and he'd watch adults smoking and think that when the adult smoker tapped ashes from their ongoing cigarette into their ashtray that they were pexing. He'd always remembered his mother smoking until he was about three or four and thought she'd stopped smoking because it upset him. He remembered being in the basement that had been flooded by Hurricane Hazel and thinking mommy's on fire mommy's on fire but she wasn't and she had never even smoked. Both of his parents thought smoking was a filthy habit and were aghast when he their son later took it up. He'd quit years ago but still occasionally missed it.

After finishing his meal and his lager he returned to the hostel and checked email. He had received a message that a neighbor of his had passed, after a long battle with throat cancer. Bob had been an actor and a bloody good actor too. Theatre people he had generally found annoying but Bob was a lovely neighbor and a very funny man. Bob had the kind of voice that could have made him a fortune doing voice-overs and commercials, but this actor preferred the stage. He lived for the live arts, and now he was dead.

He exited the Alexanderplatz station and walked toward Karl Marx Allee. It was beginning to dawn on him that an Allee was not like an alley. He was not walking toward some off the map laneway where shady business dealings were a given.

On this gorgeous unusually warm fall day he walked onto Karl Marx Allee and realized that it was a boulevard - make that a very wide boulevard. Later on he would find out that Karl Marx Allee had previously been Stalin Allee. He grinned and surmised that Karl Marx was at least moderately more acceptable to neo-liberal global capitalism than Stalin.

His first stop on Karl Marx Allee was the Captain Pretzel Gallery which promised an exhibition by the American artist Robert Longo. This exhibition consisted entirely of blurry photographs for which he could not really see any point or purpose. They seemed to be well executed and then what else...he felt he was definitely missing something but the docent was preoccupied with other visitors so he just left and shook his head.

The next stop on Karl Marx Allee was Sternberg Press. At home he had many Sternberg publications that he had bought at art book fairs. He entered the bookstore and quickly realized the degree to which he would have to discipline himself. There were several publications he could have impulsively purchased because usually why not ... books were made to be purchased and then treasured. But the last thing he wanted to be doing was accumulating luggage. So he looked through a couple of Sternberg volumes and then left the store.

It was still mid-afternoon so he took the subway over to Potsdamer Strasse and popped into the Helga Maria Klosterfelde. This was a gallery cum archive of printed matter which had earlier caught his attention. This gallery cum bookstore carried monographs by American artists such as Lawrence Weiner and Matt Mullican. He also spotted prime editions of FILE magazine, which had been published by the Canadian collective trio General Idea. The affable docent had these FILES dated as 1994 but he knew FILE stopped publishing in 1989 and so he informed the female docent. Nineteen ninety four was the year that two of the three General Idea members died of HIV-related causes. He had known the members of General Idea, including the one who was still alive and quite healthy.

He left the Helga Maria Klosterfelde without having purchased anything and found the Thai restaurant that he had dined in a few days earlier. Comfort food dependable food it would do very nicely. The weather was too good to be true, and sure enough rain was in the forecast for the next day. Rain and then a significant temperature drop. It was fall, so what the hell.

He arrived at Haus der Kultur der Weld a good hour prior to the panel so he could at least scan the exhibition. Just as he suspected, it was largely vitrines containing SI paraphernalia. Lots to browse at least, he muttered to himself.

Projected against one of the walls was a series of five films, all made by SI members. It was true, then. SI members made straight porn in order to subsidize themselves. Hah, and so typical. He had watched Guy Debord's film version of The Society of the Spectacle once and people had commented on its misogyny. Well, was Debord trying to have his cake and eat it too? Was presenting examples of the spectacle just purveying more spectacle? Was 'detournement' just a fancy word for Same Old Shit? Crude hijackings of SI rhetoric probably believed that, without having to actually believe very much of anything.

In one of the vitrines there were paintings by members of the SI. Some of them.....Asger Jorn's in particular... were almost abstract and not bad at all. Jorn was also a sculptor and a ceramicist. But what exactly constituted Situationist art. Surely not art objects...they were of course part of the spectacle. So was performance, even performance in the street that intervened or 'detourned' the everyday. Public interventions are arguably about creating spectacle where there isn't overtly a spectacle, unless one considers grids and maps themselves to be spectacle.

And his ability to partake in the information that had been assembled among the vitrines was hampered by a video almost in the centre of the exhibition, with a very annoying soundtrack. The video was a mash-

up of a Coca Cola commercial with this horrible Australian pop group The New Seekers singing 'I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony.' collaged with...more straight porn. Coca-Cola marketed itself as 'the real thing'. The duty of the spectacle is to package and then market what is reality. Authenticity was a valuable commodity, authenticity has always been an effective brand name. Buy me, I am 'authentic.'

He had always despised hippie capitalism, in which 'community' meant 'market. Is that person part of the community? Do they shop in my store or drink in my bar? At least punk capitalists never pretended to be benign. Although the activities of the SI well predated punk, punk was highly populated by entrepreneurs who had interpreted the SI very loosely and thus used SI rhetoric to at least wreak some surface havoc. Godard had sarcastically referred to the children of Marx and Coca Cola in *La Chinoise*. But the SI loathed Godard, of course. Debord argued that Godard had plagiarized his films. Whatever...the SI also loathed Warhol for obvious enough reasons and thus admired Valerie Solanas even though she was the flag-bearer of Society For Cutting Up Men and the SI membership was quite overwhelmingly male. The horrendous New Seekers commercial kept playing its dreadful song while the panelists and the moderator were arriving. People who uniformly resembled students were filling the seats so he decided he had better grab one. He of course needed to have a good view of yet more spectacle.

He noticed a woman seated in a row ahead of his now walking towards his seat. He recognized her but couldn't place a name...Jennifer? No...Hannah. Hannah Frobisher was now telling him that they had met and chatted at a reading of *Morrissey Masala*. Yes, that thing. He remembered they had argued about his book but not vehemently. More like why give space to a racist asshole like Morrissey now that everybody and their dog knows that he is a racist asshole.

He nodded and told Hannah that he indeed remembered her and their Morrissey conversation. She asked him if he was doing a reading in Berlin and he replied that he had already done one at Motto and was now just visiting. Hannah asked him if he was familiar with any of the day's panelists and he wasn't but she was. A woman named Judith Schlesinger was a friend of Hannah's. Judith Schlesinger taught at Bard in New York but was now living in Karlsruhe, according to the programme. Hannah suggested that he might join her party including Judith after the panel as they were going for drinks and he told her he'd see how he felt after the panel. He wasn't aware of any viable watering holes near Das Haus der Kultur der Weld since it was situated in proximity to Berlin's massive governmental district.

The moderator who was a German woman with a brush cut introduced the panelists and then they first spoke individually A man named Helmut Frankovich led off by outlining the genesis of the Situationist International with its evolution from the Lettrists and its predominant personalities Guy Debord, Raoul Veniger and Asger Jorn. Helmut Frankovich was not a great public speaker but he was probably a walking encyclopedia on the SI with its manifestos and its rather vicious infighting.

Helmut Frankovich was followed by the British academic Terence Blackwood who moved past the early nineteen sixties SI activities toward the SI role in the Paris 1968 riots. His mind began wandering during Professor Blackwood's paper. He remembered a Canadian experimental film congress at which one panelist talked about Pasolini supporting the cops during the parallel Italian riots of 1968. That particular panelist had been wondering why the anti-globalization protestors of the late nineties and early oughts played down their sexuality, even though so many of them were so obviously queer (but isn't queer supposed to problematize the idea of all singular sexualities?). Well, much of the sixties left had been homophobic...they associated homosexuality with the upper classes and Western decadence due to superficially reading Franz Fanon and so forth. And since Pasolini was notoriously into trade then why wouldn't he also be into cops...they were working class and generally well hung. He yawned and realized that people including Hannah Frobisher were glaring at him. Then it was Judith Schlesinger's turn to speak and she brought up the masculinist bias of the SI and the post-Marxist left and how detournement was just an excuse to refresh the machine while purporting to turn it around and re-contextualize it. Judith Schlesinger looked like she had once been a punk but now she also probably subscribed to a British Cultural Studies position on punk...that it was the fashion industry and the recording industry itself manufacturing false rebellion in order to generate revenue. She also mentioned that the American Yippies

were a descendant of the SI, which was undoubtedly true but hardly a revelation. Running an actual as opposed to human pig for president hardly detoured the American electoral process... neither did the Chicago riots of summer 1968.

Then the panelists were given an opportunity to address each other prior to the inevitable audience Q&A. Helmut Frankovich immediately laced into Judith Schlesinger for trivializing so much of what the SI had done and he reminded her about the SI's valuable contribution to a new society with their concept of psychogeography. The psychogeographical exploration of urban environments emphasized playfulness and drifting. Drifting could refer to no fixed address but also to delirious and spontaneous unpredictability..in opposition to lifeless cities and rigid architecture and also inflexible ideologies. Frankovich was indeed making good ;points here, he felt. He himself had always subscribed to the idea of the flaneur... who moves from place to place without specific intentions who is open and even provocative of unexpected encounters which might involve art or conversational discourse or perhaps even sex. The SI may have indeed been a gang of straight male pornographers but at least they weren't puritans like the Marx.....

His drifting was interrupted by Terence Blackwood suddenly being hit in the stomach by something unseen and then dying immediately. The crowd was aghast, to put it mildly. Whatever had hit Professor Blackwood had not made a sound. Neither had the professor when he hit the floor.

The building's security cops now commanded everybody to evacuate immediately. Nobody disobeyed and nobody lingered. He walked briskly out toward the governmental district and then to the Haupt Bahnhof and then to the bus stop where he would catch the 245 bus that would take him to his accommodation. He did not look around for Hannah Frobisher and her friends.

He wanted nothing more than to be alone.

Fortunately the 245 bus arrived quickly and he found a seat. Three stops later he got off the bus and walked home. No nightcaps.

He undressed quickly and fell into a deep sleep. The chattering teenagers were actually courteous to the old man who went to bed much earlier than they did. Perhaps they had taken mood altering substances and were all listening intently to their iPads or Soundclouds or whatever other music links.

When he was waking up it was a different environment entirely. He could hear their voices and it quickly became apparent they were talking about the murder at the SI panel.

No sound.....what the fuck, no sound.....welcome to the 21st century.....there are silent guns....you've been watching too many spy movies.....20th century spy movies... James Bond for fuck's sakes.....more to the point, why would somebody want to take out some obscure academic....British academic mind you...whatever stupid nationality why would somebody get so worked up about an academic.....yes, don't they just write nasty essays online about each other.....maybe that's what it's about...you mean then that the murderer was an unhinged academic.....yes, maybe indeed.....more to the point, did anybody see anybody in the audience with any kind of weapon.....who knows these days.....maybe somebody's phone has a gun in it.....maybe somebody's laptop has a kill command....maybe drugs were involved.....

Now he decided to wake up shit and shower. The kids kept talking. He wasn't in the room and he never really had been.

During his morning breakfast at Neumann's he decided he had to get out of Berlin. Over the course of the day he would figure out where next and then make the necessary arrangements.

At breakfast he realized that the assassination of the visiting British academic was indeed a big story. He could read limited German but he could decipher that local and international police could not ascertain either a motive or a weapon.

He decided that he should return to the Happy Hostel and check out...get out of Berlin at least for a while. He was able to negotiate a partial refund from the hostel after explaining that an emergency situation had developed.

He grabbed the 245 bus to the Haupt Bahnhof, where he knew there was a travel bureau. Before queuing up at the bureau, he retrieved his laptop and googled possible transportation from Berlin to Venice. He would take in the Venice Biennale even though Venice in the fall season had always been notoriously rainy.

He could afford to fly from Berlin to Venice but a train was cheaper and he was now quite attracted to the idea of a long train ride. With a nearly twelve hour train ride, he could leave in the early evening and arrive not long after sunrise. He could sleep on the train as he'd always been able to sleep soundly on trains as well as planes. So he booked a seven thirty train.

Then he checked out hotels. There was one he'd previously stayed at near St. Marco Square but what was its name? Hotel All Angelo, that was it. He booked himself in for three nights and if something unforeseen came up in Venice he would then extend his booking.

He checked his luggage in a locker he would return to after dinner. Then he decided to tour at least a couple of institutions on Museum Island.

He would prioritize the Alte Nationalgalerie on Museum Island and if he had time he would take in some Van Goghs. He'd actually seen and heard enough about Van Gogh to last a lifetime and he was sick of mad artists with their insipid cults. He had recently seen a dreadful movie containing a pissing contest between Van Gogh and Paul Gauguin. So he did concentrate on the Rembrandts he could find. The Dutch master deployed flawless composition and colour differentiation and above all an understanding of lighting. Lighting separated good painters from poor ones, even though he understood very well how modernist let alone postmodernist artists problematized such classical criteria for greatness. The flatter the better and to hell with depth. Still after three hours of Rembrandts he decided he had to preserve his eyesight and stop looking at large European masterpieces.

He decided to travel to the Mehringdamm district and check out The Boiler or 'Der Boila'. He decided to play sexual tourist before getting out of Berlin, even though the gentlemen at the bathhouse in the late afternoon would hardly be among the seven wonders of the world. But since himself wasn't one of those seven wonders he would take what he could get.

Der Boila was clean and well-maintained. The lockers were more modern than those in similar Toronto sexual facilities. He requested help with his key from a gentleman who wasn't exactly attractive himself and who clearly wasn't impressed by the newcomer. He walked down to the cruising zone and made himself semi-familiar with the layout. He did connect with an undistinguished gentleman, who allowed the visitor to suck him off for a few minutes before excusing himself. Clearly the man did not wish to cum too early which was understandable but inconvenient. He liked to get guys off since he was himself getting off less and less frequently.

Der Boila was really quite dead... he should return some night at a later hour when it would be more crowded and darker so that nobody could just look at him and then walk away. That rejection happened to him once and then shortly soon after the first rejection there was a second. He didn't particularly register with other men...his preferences weren't clear and they never had been.

He sat on a bench absently watching the mandatory porn. A man walked toward him and checked out his cock and then moved away. He was cut... that of course still mattered to so many gentlemen.

After another half hour he decided he'd had quite enough of Der Boila and decided to grab a Thai dinner around the corner before heading to the Haupt Bahnhof and his train to Venice. He would make sure he had a full stomach before the twelve hour ride.

After making himself comfortable on the train to Venice he realized he still had at least an hour to kill before he'd be able to fall asleep. He listened to music. He selected angry hybrid industrial house music...two opposites that provided him with an interesting clash. Peace love and unity mashed up with noise for its own sake. At least the industrial band didn't flaunt their Charles Manson fixation. Manson was

the lowest of the low... industrial culture still saw Charlie Manson as the ultimate anarchic outlaw but actually the man was nothing more than a rabid white supremacist dictator. As well as a serial killer.

Why the hell would somebody shoot a minor British academic... in a public forum? If somebody held a grudge against Terence Blackwood why didn't they politely kill him privately? The previous evening's sniper had of course also been polite...he or she'd used some sort of ultra-modern unrecognizable weapon that made absolutely no noise. Not even a hissing when Blackwood fell instantly to the floor.

So who was Terence Blackwood? Nothing more nor less than a political science professor at Cambridge. The man had been published in a smattering of journals... nothing in his bibliography seemed to refer to the Situationist International. So why had Professor Blackwood been on that panel? Perhaps he knew the right people.

Who were the right people? Who would that make the wrong people? He resisted the temptation to order a drink when the waiter walked by. Academics certainly had their feuds. There were academics who built entire careers on the repudiation of rival academics. But assassination in a public forum...why? And then who?

The train was traveling in a steady not unpleasant rhythm. He could hear a bass line...he wished he had a recording programme on his laptop. But he didn't so he tossed catchphrases around in his head as an alternative.

Brexit Hex it flex it. pex it fix it.

Flx it fix it fix it!

The British electorate wanted to just fix the problem. Vote for the easiest way to fix it... make that the most superficial. Just get the job done even though the job was most certainly not worth doing.

He wondered if Terence Blackwood was a yes or no person with regards to Brexit. And then why Blackwood. Why not either or both of the other two panelists?

He was now remembering dates of the year. All even numbers.....sixty-one, one zero three, one forty-seven, two fifty-three. Why were these dates linked? The weather? Sexual activity?

What and why what and why what and why..... He fell asleep just past the Hamburg Bahnhof.

He was awakened from a deep sleep by an announcement that the next and final stop was Venezia. He sat up before visiting the washroom and combing his remaining hair. At the hotel he would take a shower and shave.

It was pouring rain in Venice. Getting to the hotel wasn't exactly easy as the water levels were so high that he could not distinguish between canals and streets and the city was most certainly not structured around a grid. European cities never had grids but Venice was beyond the pale. He had to ask directions numerous times during his forty five minute walk from train station to the hotel.

Finally he checked in and immediately ran the shower.. The hot water worked, which was a major relief. He hung up his clothes and then changed into something clean and unfortunately not waterproof. Hopefully his raincoat would suffice.

Because it was Monday the Biennale in the Giardini would not be open. There were Arsenale satellite exhibitions he could take in but instead he decided to take in Doge's Palace. The Doge was the supreme ruler or authority of the former Venetian Republic... the palace was built in 1340 and subjected to various modifications since that date. In addition to being a home for the Doge and a gathering place for Venetian dignitaries, the Doge's Palace also housed the republic's prisons.

The Doge's Palace was overwhelming. So Gothic and so rococo that he almost wished he had saved his money. But it was Monday and the Venice Biennale was not open so there had to be alternatives. He appreciated discovering new old artists...Veronese and Tintoretto. Paolo Veronese was an Italian artist who specialized in extremely large historically-themed paintings. Tintoretto, who didn't seem to have a first name, was an artist who decorated large halls and sprawling ceilings. And the Doge's Palace was most definitely a series of large halls with sprawling ceilings.

He walked through those halls and worked his way to each one of their centres so that he could pivot while looking up to the ceilings. Then he made several turns and found himself at the legendary Bridge of Sighs, a pathway between the Doge's interrogation rooms and its New Prison. Sighs as in resignation to loss of freedom for the rest of one's life.

He was startled to find a video work by the renowned Scottish artist Douglas Gordon. *Gente di Palermo* is a video loop characterized by a floating inflatable blue toy dolphin that had been left by some perverse visitor in order to commute with the dead. He had always been skeptical about Douglas Gordon with his *24 Hour Psycho* installation and other works involving the meeting points between film and art. Film and art had never co-existed comfortably as far as he was concerned and artists like Gordon did not help. But Gordon's installation or intervention at The Doge made him laugh. The humour was so utterly necessary.

The theme of the 2019 Venice Biennale was one of shock, intrigue, and controversy. Shock was such a staple of modernism and hadn't modernism been discredited and displaced and just dissed eons ago? Well, yes, but he decided to take the plunge and find his way over to the Biennale's most controversial exhibition. The Swiss-Icelandic artist Christoph Buchel's installation *Barca Nostra* (or *Our Boat*), as part of The Arsenale but site-specific, has been generating huge debates everywhere. Is this fishing boat that sank in the Mediterranean in 2015 with up to 1,100 migrants on board *art*? If so, is it exploitative art or art about exploitation? Is there a difference? Hasn't institutional critique been long not only tolerated but encouraged by the institutions it purports to criticize? Well, yes, and then what?

He looked at the installation and it was what it was, a wrecked boat. A found object. He thought of Kenneth Goldsmith's reading of the Afro-American police murder victim Michael Brown's autopsy report. Is this illuminating socio-political analysis or is this aestheticized found object merely reiterating the smugly oppressive power structures that permitted the police shooting in the first place? There is a serious difference between aestheticizing a urinal in order to problematize aestheticization and the very idea of art object and then dehumanizing further a person who has already been dehumanized by the all too familiar device of murder.

Signage informed him that there was going to be a panel on the biennale and this controversial installation on Wednesday night. Despite the murder that had taken place at the Berlin Situationist International panel, he decided he would attend this panel before checking out of his hotel on Thursday morning.

He decided he needed to eat and he found a restaurant near St. Marco Square. At the next table were an American woman and a French man. They drunkenly asked him if he was the Scottish racing car driver Sir Jackie Stewart. He assured the assumed couple that he was most certainly not a racing car driver and he wasn't even Scottish. They believed him and then they didn't. They asked him to join them in a selfie and he consented. Then he ordered his meal and said nothing further to the drunken tourists.

He savored the hearty European breakfast provided by the hotel and then set out towards The Giardini. It was still raining but not nearly as heavily as the previous day. As he walked along the beach he thought

about how Venice's rising water levels frankly could spell the end of the city and how Venice might have indeed been paradise for many but was now on the verge of obsolescence.

He paid his entry fee and decided to concentrate on pavilions for the day. He knew there was no way he would be able to see everything in a day so he followed the list he had prepared during breakfast.

He was immediately distracted by a gigantic sculpture just outside of the American pavilion. He walked toward the huge open wood carving, which resembled a radial sunburst which revealed itself to be contested by its tail. This sculpture by Martin Puryear had been touted as one of the Biennale's highlights but once he got past the sculpture's size he found himself wondering *and then what*. He thought he was looking at a cross between a Brancusi and a Goodyear advertisement.

Somebody now called his name. He turned to recognize a Canadian artist who had been living in Berlin. The artist's name was Eric Ralph who was a truly interdisciplinary wunderkind....painting, sculpture, video and even performance. Eric Ralph had indeed done well for himself by spurning labels.

He had thought of contacting Eric while in Berlin but he hadn't.

They agreed that the exterior sculpture of the American pavilion was somewhat underwhelming and now entered the pavilion. The carvings inside were aesthetically pleasing but again underwhelming. He reminded himself that big did not necessarily mean better.

He and Eric decided to tour together for a while. They moved toward the Chinese pavilion which had almost no lineup. Here they were treated to some truly ancient watercolors which unexpectedly transformed into nearly abstract animations. After a while the startling transformation headed off so he and Eric walked toward the British pavilion, which had a lineup. Eric saved his place in the lineup while he bought tea and coffee.

The British pavilion showcased the tiny sculptures of Irish artist Cathy Wilkes. There were too many people in the pavilion for the sculptures to be seen effectively. This was fragile art, not big art. It was making a statement about hunger and poverty, masters and servants, upstairs and downstairs. But none of this was news, even though the art had generally pleasing qualities. And the neighboring Welsh pavilion featured a monologue. He began thinking about time based art in exhibition spaces and how galleries were about space more than about time and why so much video art was ineffective in galleries because nobody had the time to take in the entire video or film or monologue. He had been noticing a trend for years involving both performative and documentary film being showcased in galleries and he wasn't against it but he was increasingly dissatisfied. He and Eric split up when he announced his decision to visit the Ghanaian pavilion that Eric had seen previously. He asked if Eric would be attending the panel the next evening but he emphatically stated that he wouldn't be.

For its first year of participation in the Venice Biennale Ghana offered projected films by the well-regarded director and artist John Akomfrah. He had always appreciated Akomfrah's documentaries and gallery installations but he could only spend so much time with them today. If they were being presented in a group show in a gallery and not at the Venice Biennale he would have happily spent at least an hour with these three-screened films.

Dance and music as resistance was a theme that seemed to raise its head in at least a couple of pavilions. The Korean pavilion offered films utilizing dance steps. *If I can't dance I don't want to be part of your revolution...* this sentiment doubtlessly existed even before Emma Goldman. The Swiss pavilion offered dance spooling backwards. Well, which way are we going? Brazil offered a trans and non-binary dance class. Yes, and then what?

But more than any other trope, environmental disaster was the Biennale's dominant theme. What do dance and nature have in common aside from ;primordial instinct? Birds....they sing and they fly above the wretched earth. In Laure Prouvost's French pavilion a bird sculpture stares at the incoming visitors. *I'm here you are all on my territory you can stay I guess I have no choice but please respect my seniority and behave yourselves*. The sculptural installation in the front of the pavilion leads to another epic film... of the sea and its seriously crashing waves.

The Canadian pavilion offered a white-out of ice and then a dramatized apology to the Inuit for the displacement from their Iglookik territories. Yes, this is important history. Yes, he was indisputably a member of the settler population who constantly needed to be reminded of what he and his ancestors had done. But this was yet another film that was not installed with consideration to the space. The difference between video or film in galleries and then in cinemas is one of space versus time. Neither special consideration nor theatrical acknowledgment were present in this pavilion.

The Russian pavilion was as melodramatic as it had been in previous years...the Icelandic and Finnish pavilions transcended their relatively tiny spaces by going big and performative. Both Iceland and Finland are smart enough to send up the visitors' general expectations.

The Indian pavilion was sombre and effective. It featured cabinets of curiosities reframing the nation's colonial history. He appreciated the inaugural Madagascar pavilion with its funeral-evoking deluge of black tissue paper. Here was a good example of less being more. But he was disappointed to learn that both Algeria and Kazakhstan's exhibitions had been canceled by their own governments at the last minute. Something of a political nature had been raised then disputed and then not resolved.

He decided that he had seen enough for one day. Tomorrow he would be concentrating on the Arsenale. He walked toward St. Marco Square thinking about art and politics and the endlessly unresolvable debates. Were they simply ying and yang? Did political art only preach to the converted? Most of what he had just seen did so...were any visitors' minds and opinions likely to be changed with regards to environmental issues for example? *Radical content demands radical form.* He thought of how formal concerns need not be apolitical but that opinion now seemed to be unfashionable. Or else, art with a politic could easily be absorbed by museum systems and thus de-politicized. Well, this had always been the case.

So, then. What next? He found a different restaurant than the one from last night and ordered a salmon dinner. Nobody at the next table mistook him for a Scottish racing car driver, or any sort of driver. He had never been a driver.

While eating breakfast it became apparent that the daily rainstorm was even worse than that of the day he arrived in Venice. He wondered if the Biennale would be closed down for the day. Certainly some of the pavilions with outdoor components would be

But then he would be restricting himself to the indoor Arsenale. He was so busy being a pedestrian on the previous day that he had failed to note that the 2019 Arsenale was curated by the noted Ralph Rogoff and that it was titled *May You Live In Interesting Times*. May we do indeed, do 'we' have any choice in the matter? And who are 'we'? Well, the public...everybody who is not the curator or perhaps one of the seventy-nine artists? The 'community'? Oh, stop!

He finished his second cup of Earl Gray and then tidied up before walking to the site.

Walking...walking...walking in the rain. Of course he had not brought an umbrella overseas with him...he already had too much baggage.

There were artists' names he recognized and then many more that he didn't. There was of course *Barca Nostra*, the now infamous Christof Buchel with that boat. Well, he would be hearing all about that thing tonight he supposed.. He scanned down the list....Stan Douglas, Jimmie Durham, Arthur Jafa, Lee Bul, Christian Marclay, Teresa Margolles, Ulrike Muller, Hito Steryl, Rosemarie Trockel. All good, and then he was up for surprises.

He did think about the 2017 Biennale where he had chanced upon works by the British language and word artist John Latham. This artist had enjoyed practically his own corner of the venue... Latham was so wittily prescient with his collages and writings. Oh well, the powers that be can't be repeating the same artists every Biennale.

Actually curator Ralph Rugoff was very good about his required balancing acts. For the main exhibition he reduced the number of artists to eighty and half of them were women. All of them were still alive. But this surely was not an issue... he had always appreciated seeing and learning about deceased artists. Not icons, but people who worked and then died.

He was greeted by a film montage by the American artist Christian Marclay, who was one of the few artists working with film in gallery situations who actually made sense because his work is above all *about* time. In *48 War Movies*, each spooling movie blocks out part of the preceding movie. He thought of a text Pasolini had written in which montage was a form of death...a literal killing of a vital present image. Time has passed and so have the players or the scenery or the image composition.

He circulated slowly, appreciating the photographs of outsiders or *outcastes* at night by the Indian artist Soham Gupta. He appreciated the black South African artist Zanele Muholi as a tribeswoman with rope nooses as hair. Not exactly subtle, but highly effective because of its directness.

He spent time with work by the Los Angeles artist Arthur Jafa who had collaged footage of black on white violence and the testimony of a reformed white supremacist. Was there an optimism happening here? Could the observation that we do indeed live in interesting times be referring to the possibility that some of the most wretched people on earth might indeed become redeemed?

He decided to take a break from the Arsenal and visit the Polish pavilion which Eric had recommended. He was not disappointed. Roman Stanczak's *Flight* inverted a private jet plane. The controls were dangling outside and the seats were all floating. The seats were all lost in space. He thought of a photo he had seen in 2000 of a notoriously sartorial British rock star on a plane that was about to crash. *Oh dear oh dear , this will spell the end of my suit.*

He returned to the Arsenal where he was dazzled by the Japanese artist Ryoji Ikeda, which was positioned in proximity to an AI artwork by Hito Steryl which posited a futuristic garden in a Venice with elevated walkways. He smiled at this artist's prescience. If Venice needed anything to ensure its survival it was elevated walkways. The difference between the walkways and the canals had become more than blurry. As he approached St. Marco Square en route to the hotel where he would take a brief nap, he had to be helped up onto the planks that had been installed in the square so that people could walk above the flooded city. Somebody else had to take his hand so that he could then pull himself up.

Yes, he was now old. But he was not about to drown..at least not just yet.

After dinner he entered Espace Louis Vuitton where the impending panel would be taking place. He allowed himself time to look at the collateral Biennale installation by the French artist Philippe Parreno, titled *Elsewhere*.

This installation focused on the enduring development of microorganisms. Yellow wallpaper hosted black irises. One wall did not host the yellow wallpaper but rather a vertical mechanical mirrors shutter. The entire installation was of course digitally controlled. There was indeed life in the wallpaper, but of course the wallpaper was the predominant element. He preferred wallpaper art that didn't pretend to be about anything else but wallpaper. He had always appreciated colour field painting. He liked visits to the dentist to be soothing and comfortable so therefore the wallpaper had to be perfect.

Fortunately the panel was to be held in a nearby lecture hall where the wallpaper would have no pretensions to being art. The hall was already half full and the three panelists were setting themselves up. They were Maria Scattaloni, Giuseppi Lametti, and Kate Marsden. He sat down and checked his translation earphones.

He stiffened for a moment as he recognized the formerly Toronto artist Daniel Lawrence briefly standing up in the front row. He and Daniel Lawrence looked slightly similar...enough that he was frequently

mistaken for Mr. Lawrence. This had been going on for some time and it annoyed him as he did not like Daniel Lawrence and his art very much. Daniel Lawrence was a smarmy neo-conceptualist who now lived in New York. He pretended to tie his shoes so that Daniel Lawrence would not see him.

The moderator introduced the panelists and then Maria Scattaloni spoke first. This short and charmingly perky woman opened by referring to the Biennale's theme. *May You Live in Interesting Times...* This Anglo salutation has been meant to refer to periods of uncertainty, crisis, and turmoil...not unlike the political social and environmental climate of today. Yes indeed, most of the art did fit comfortably within that casual curatorial premise He began to drift. The curatorial choices were loosely enough framed by this maxim of referring not only to critical situations throughout the globe but also to the misinformation industry. It was not only the Internet that provided service for charlatans and other snake-oil merchants to propagate misinformation and propaganda...it was the art world itself.

Scattaloni moved through several examples of her favourite works in the Biennale but now they just seemed like her recommendations as to what should be seen before the Biennale closed. And what if the City of Venice were to close the Biennale tomorrow due to the rising water levels and the near impossibility of walking in Venice?

Maria Scattaloni did not mention that boat...*Our Boat*. Neither did Giuseppe Lametti. He did talk about the new Ghanian pavilion and the Indian pavilion as well as the Arthur Jafa films. He did not talk about digital misinformation or the fact that professional liars had the money to dominate all means of communication and now they were doing so more than ever before. Lametti did mention climate change.. climate change that was manifesting itself right outside Espace Louis Vutton. But, he thought to himself, large corporations would manage to survive climate change-related disasters and even invent new products to go with the flow.

God, he hated that expression...*go with the flow*. He had a former friend who talked about how she preferred to *go with the flow*. He always wanted to know who was controlling the flow. But how could he or anybody else know? Such were the times. They were not interesting times; they were desperate times. Kate Marsden did actually mention *Our Boat* and the contradiction of it being installed in proximity to a café where Biennale patrons could have tea and snacks and either ignore the boat or comment on its wretchedness without elaborating further. The boat was an eyesore. Contrary to the opinions of many citizens and collectors, art has never always been about beauty. But eyesores.. ugliness... are of course in opposition to beauty. Beauty has long been a meaningless concept omnipresent in advertising...yes, and then what? And what does ugliness accomplish? Is it provocative, or simply yawn-inducing. What percentage of Biennale patrons read the project description and manage to connect *Our Boat* with its eleven hundred passengers who died while attempting to migrate? He suspected all too few.

He recalled endless debates about how particular examples of art were socio-politically useful rather than cynical and exploitative because they got people talking? And then what did people do when the talking was exhausted?

After Marsden's presentation, the panelists now confronted each other, to the degree that they might have been expected to. Scattaloni actually defended the Biennale's curation of *Our Boat* for the very reason that the piece was controversial and people talked about it. Did this mean that they didn't talk about other works in the Biennale? They simply liked or disliked them. Marsden actually referenced Social Media when opining that people either simply liked or disliked exhibitions and art objects unless they were designated 'controversial'. Marsden had crossed a line by referring to a world outside of the art world. This discussion actually was on the verge of becoming an argument. His mind ceased to drift.

Giuseppe Lametti's head was turning from left to right as he was positioned in the middle of the two combative panelists. Giuseppe Lametti suddenly fell to the floor. The moderator had to stop the arguing panels and draw their attention to what the audience was gasping about. Giuseppe Lametti was not about to be rising from the floor.

The moderator in tandem with the Espace Louis Vutton security police now implored everybody to exit the building immediately. Several audience members turned around to see if Lametti was still down on the floor. He was and he would be until the police and the ambulance would be arriving A siren was now indeed audible.

He checked out of his Venice hotel after eating another hearty breakfast. He had an eight hour train ride to Vienna ahead of him and train food was always to be discouraged.

Boarding the train at St Lucia station he emailed his friend Megan Coleman who he would be meeting up with in Vienna. Megan was an under the radar Toronto artist and poet who had booked a booth at the book fair so that she could disseminate her self-published chapbooks. He had arranged to share table space with Megan... he would be paying her a percentage upon arrival.

He had also booked a room in the Ibis Budget Hotel. This perfunctory hotel was located near the famous Prater Amusement park, not that he would be seeking out amusement rides or anything else associated with such parks even though the Prater Park was allegedly quite wild after dark. Megan Coleman was also staying at the Ibis Budget Hotel. She was not a wild person.

He declined a cup of tea when the tray person walked past him. He thought about the killing at last night's Venice Biennale Panel. Megan had told him about another panel that would be taking place at Vienna's Academy of Applied Arts, which was providing the venue for the art book fair. He had agreed to meet her at this panel after the book fair's closing but now he wasn't so sure about doing so.

In Berlin and then in Venice, a panel participant had been suddenly leveled by....by what? He googled to see if there had been any coroner's or toxicologist's reports on the panel assassinations. None. Also, there were no suspects, as of yet.

He figured the Venice assailant had to be somebody sitting near the front. What about Daniel Lawrence? Well, what about him? Daniel Lawrence was a self-promoting megalomaniac but that didn't mean he was a murderer. What on earth might be his motive? Did Daniel Lawrence even know Giuseppe Lametti? Did that matter?

Was Lametti particularly controversial? No, not particularly. He was an art writer without any provocative profile. Did he have a weird personal life? Nothing known. Did he have unhinged ex-lovers? What field did Lametti play on sexually? Lametti could well have been gay he could have been metrosexual. There had been nothing obvious about the panelist. He was difficult to read. A lot of academics enjoyed being difficult to read.

He hadn't noticed any people in the Venice audience who had also been in Berlin. Not that any of these people were the kind of people who jumped out... they were anonymous audience members without any pretensions to be something else. How did he know this? He didn't.

Whoever had leveled Giuseppe Lametti and the panelist in Berlin had access to some sort of very sophisticated weapon. What kind of weapon? Was it built into a phone? And how did it manage to be so silent? Were bullets even involved? *Who the fuck knew?*

He thought about murdered academics. He thought of a Toronto art professor who had been murdered in his office at the University of Toronto. This was a nearly two decade cold case now. There had been speculation about an angry entitled student who had been given a probably deserving poor grade. There had also been unproven mutterings about rough trade.

He again declined a cup of tea being sold by the railway employee with the ever-present tray. He retrieved his laptop and his ear phones and then elected some chill out music. In about half an hour he fell asleep.

When he woke up he again searched for updates on the Venice and Berlin panel killings. There were none. He put the laptop away and thought about European politics. He thought about Brexit. Was Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn an anti-Semite? Were these accusations due to his support for a Palestinian state or were there other factors involved. Whatever...Corbyn had been painted as an extremist and meanwhile Tory leader Boris Johnson was barely not as rabidly right wing as Nigel Farage..the leader of the Brexit party. Morrissey had endorsed Nigel Farage. He would be selling his Morrissey book at the Vienna Art Book fair. *Morrissey Mandala* indeed.

He joined Megan Coleman at breakfast and agreed to meet her at seven o'clock at the University of Applied Arts. He would set up his share of the retail table. Megan would be joined by a friend of hers named Paul Brundstadt who would be having dinner with her. Perhaps he might like to join Megan and Paul? He thought it over without making any commitment.

He cleaned his teeth after breakfast and set out for the Belvedere Museums. Actually he was interested in the Upper Belvedere and then the Belvedere 21, which was about ten minutes away from the Upper and Lower Belvederes. Those museums were situated in a park which was stately, to put it mildly. The park was of course a World Heritage site.

The Upper Belvedere featured paintings from its Gustav Klimt collection. Klimt was an artist he wished to know more about... Klimt was an Austrian Symbolist painter..one of the major artists of the Secessionist movement. The secessionists were a big deal....they even had a famous Viennese gallery named after them.

Klimt was primarily obsessed with the female body but this artist's techniques seemed to be anticipating abstractionism or non-object painting This was why Klimt was for him an artist of interest. Klimt's celebrated painting *The Kiss* was fortunately on the verge of not being about a man and a woman kissing, At least these paintings weren't biblical. He had seen an early Rubens exhibition at the Art Gallery of Toronto in which the biblical sources had diminished his enjoyment of the artist's considerable skill. Klimt strongly influenced the younger artist Egon Schiele, who was a major figurative painter of the early twentieth century. Schiele's work was downright visceral... .he seemed to be anticipating expressionism. He was foreshadowing a love of paint and crayon for their own sakes and not as representational tools. Although Schiele was notoriously heterosexual, his self-portraits appeared to be works by a man who loved male bodies.

He thought of a Toronto painter friend who described herself as an abstract painter working figuratively. His Toronto friend had a strong ambivalence about abstractionism; he had an consistent ambivalence about figurative painting and drawing. Of course he now thought about the huge contradiction surrounding Pollock and the famous fifties abstractionists....de Kooning, .Noland, Newman and others. So many of the men were official or unofficial anarchists and their work was appropriated as Cold War propaganda by the American State Department. In fifties America one was free to make art for its own sake and not conform to statist social realism. He had a low tolerance for social realism; but he knew all too well that socio-political art no matter how formally experimental was too often derogatively classified as 'social realism'.

He decided he'd had enough of the Upper Belvedere and now he walked toward the Belvedere Twenty One, as in twenty-first century. Not all of this museum's programming was executed in the twenty-first century however. The top floor of the gallery was devoted to the work of Josef Bauer. He immediately fell in love with Bauer's exhibition and his body of work. Bauer was working with sculpture, language, body performance and more. Bauer was his kind of artist...one who refused to separate language and image. The artist had a wicked deadpan sense of humour. He made a painting called *blau* which presented the word of that primary colour in red painted text against a red canvas. He did the same thing with *gelb* and a blue canvas. red on red, blue on blue, was there a yellow on yellow titled *rot*. Bauer made colour paintings about their own and then not their own colours...but rather the missing colours. The exhibition also included a series of visibly portable sculptures titled *BuchStaben*. He made a sculpture titled *zeit* consisting of an elongated z and a smaller t with the other two letters present by not being present. Josef Bauer was his new favourite artist.

He checked the time and realized that he'd better head over to MUMOK in the Museum Quarter as his next two days in Vienna would involve sitting still at a booth at the Art Nook Fair. MUMOK was presenting an exhibition titled *Vertigo* which mercifully had nothing whatever to do with Hitchcock's film. Rather the exhibition was about dizziness and delirium, and art which caused such bodily and mental states. This meant op art. *OP Art and a History of Deception 1520 to 1970*.

Some of the artworks on display in the exhibition Vertigo use techniques of visual stimulation that might lead to physical discomfort. mumok will not assume any liability. (from exhibition pamphlet)

And the list of artists of course included some of the regulars of whom he could never get enough: Josef Albers, Tony Conrad, Gianni Colombo and Grazia Varisco, Bridget Riley. But op art was devoted to the anti-classical, so the curator included earlier works that were aggressively anti-classical without bearing any particular resemblance to what became known as op art. And the exhibition's title did indeed reference Hitchcock, but he felt that the reference was incidental. The title might attract a non-art audience et cetera.

He now sought out the four Bridget Riley works included in *Vertigo*. Bridget Riley was a goddess. He more than marveled at the detail and attention span and sheer commitment of her canvases. He knew that Bridget Riley's art had been consumed by rich acidheads who prided themselves on owning art objects to stare at on rainy nights when they did not want to brave the weather so they indulged in psychedelic drugs. But this only made him respect Riley's work more. He loved wallpaper. Wallpaper had a bad reputation among those who felt that art, and also music, had to be expressive. Nonsense..it had to be present in order to be stared at or listened to or however appreciated. And Bridget Riley's art is musical. Bridget Riley was a proto-raver.

After Bridget Riley and more *Vertigo*, he now took the underground to the Applied Arts building where he hooked up with Megan and her friend. Paul Brundstadt was a small wiry fellow about fifty something who seemed to be very quiet. He decided that it would be best to decline the dinner invitation as he didn't want to fall into the trap of talking with Megan and leaving Paul Brundstadt out of the conversation. He was not especially in the mood for strangers.

He slept in and missed the hotel's free breakfast. He had to grab a hybrid breakfast and brunch at a café near the hotel. The service was slow but he was still not in any hurry.

He arrived at the Academy of Applied Arts cafeteria which had been cleared out in order to accommodate all the vendors' booths. He remembered Megan's booth number and sat down beside her.

Megan had already sold a few of her chap books. After about ten minutes he sold a copy of *Morrissey Masala*. He noticed that the man who bought his book had already bought a lot of other books.

But traffic was slow and more people walked by his and Megan's booth than those who stopped to at least browse. So he and Megan compared gallery notes. She savored the Klimt collection but thought Egon Schiele was just an overrated dickhead. She appreciated the op art exhibition but not as much as he did. She wasn't particularly keen on Josef Bauers but she understood why he would be. She had visited *Sessesion* and was unimpressed and of course had spent valuable time with the Durer drawings at the Albertine Museum. If he'd had more time the previous day he would've gone to the Durer exhibition but he didn't so he didn't.

Megan was selling another chapbook when an English woman leafed through *Morrissey Masala*. The woman formed at him and asked why he was writing about Morrissey of all bloody people. He tried to explain to her that the book wasn't really about Morrissey but she replied then why that title. How could it not be if the man's name is in the fucking title? Morrissey had been on so many people's shit list for years and not only in dear old blighty. The woman did not buy a copy of his book.

He would have to cover the booth by himself whenever Megan went outside for a cigarette. Megan smoked too much, although he himself used to be a smoker. After an hour or so her friend Paul joined her at the booth. He took this opportunity to offer Paul a seat and then go check out the other booths.

Not that he was buying anything today or tomorrow. He did not want to be accumulating art books and spending money. And there certainly were temptations. He chanced upon a small publication called *how to shoplift books* by somebody named David Horvitz. This publication of course reminded him of Abbie Hoffman's *Steal This Book* and how the American Yippies were a somewhat bastardized descendant of the Situationist International and how the SI imperative to detourne the mainstream assumed a desire to crash the mainstream and perhaps even profit from it. Steal this book, from a bookstore where there are surveillance cameras.

He noticed rival Toronto art book publishers *Art Metropole* and *Impulse B* hosting nearly adjacent booths. He had history with both organizations so he dutifully made his rounds. Hannah or Anna from Art Met offered him a glass of wine which he declined. She asked if he would be attending the next evening's art books panel and he nodded. What would life be without panels, he muttered to himself.

He returned to his booth where Megan and Paul were jonesing for cigarettes

Paul didn't seem to talk to people aside from Megan. Paul and his experimental jazz group would be performing tonight and he had been invited. He thought it would be good protocol to attend, even though he generally disliked jazz.. Paul's quartet which was named *Winds And Rhythms* would be playing at Raum 4. *Winds and Rhythms* did not sound like an alternative let alone classic rock band.

The afternoon dragged on. He sold five more copies of *Morrissey Masala* and encountered a few more people who were wondering why on earth Morrissey. He did encounter another non-customer who found the juxtaposition of Morrissey and Masala to be humorous...even oxymoronic. He appreciated this person's perceptiveness but not their refusal to just buy the damn book and see for themselves whether it lived up to the title's seductive promise.

Megan was selling her chapbooks and was thus too busy for much conversation. He grabbed a snack as she covered for him in case of any more sales. There weren't any more.

He noticed that *Printed Matter* from New York had a booth. He indeed had personal history with *Printed Matter* but he recognize any of the people working their booth. They had taken some copies of *Morrissey Masala* but had sold them and didn't feel a need to take any more on consignment.

As dinner hour approached he packed up his unsold books and grabbed a quick bite in the nearby Bahnhof's mall. Then it was time to take the Underground to Raum 4. Here Paul's jazz quarter with the forgettable name of *Winds and Rhythms* played for nearly an hour and that hour was interminable. When he was younger he had liked Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy but now all that music seemed too busy and too earnest. Its original expressionist qualities had long been softened. Paul's music was muzak that didn't know it was muzak.

When the set was over he bid Megan and Paul good night and got back to the hotel as rapidly as possible. He managed to avoid venting an opinion about the boring music he had just wasted an hour listening to.

When he arrived at the book fair the next day Megan was clearly hung over. He guessed that she had gone for more than a few with her special friend and then some additional friends.

This was somewhat surprising. He always thought jazz musicians after the nineteen fifties did not drink heavily and abuse other illicit substances. He associated free jazz with religion, but apparently not with this case.

He was glad that Megan didn't ask how he'd liked Paul's music. He appreciated that she was smart enough not to do so.

The people browsing at their booth were interested in Megan's chap books... her drawings and her poetry. He wished more would browse through and then purchase *Morrissey Masala* but they didn't. At least nobody gave him an earful about Morrissey.

He bought a cup of tea while Megan guarded the fort. Then she went outside for a coffin nail. Were cigarettes good for hangovers? It had been so long that he had forgotten.

The book fair was making him restless. After Vienna, he was thinking in terms of returning to Berlin for a couple of days and then seeing what was happening in London. He was feeling a need to go to the United Kingdom before Brexit... before the big inevitable stupid crash. He had friends he could contact and perhaps even crash with. None of his friends supported Brexit.

But now he wondered whatever had happened to legitimate criticism of the EU from a leftist anti-globalist capitalist perspective. The racist anti-immigration xenophobes had completely co-opted all criticism of the EU and neo-liberalism and pseudo-globalist capitalism. He thought back to the Canadian political landscape. Former Tory Prime Minister Harper was known to disdain Donald Trump. The American president wasn't a real conservative...he was a protectionist... he was an advocate and practitioner of big centralized government et cetera.

He thought about how Harper following many prominent American conservatives pretended not to be racist because racism was bad for business and also because of their own racist beliefs that racial minorities tended to be socially conservative. He also knew way too many queers and also feminists who still believed this crap.

He was awakened by a man asking him about *Morrissey Masala*. Was the title an oxymoron? Well of course it was. But this man, who had already purchased a few other books from other booths, bought a copy of *Morrissey Masala*. He also bought one of Megan's chap books. He handled her transaction as she was again outside smoking.

When she returned he decided it was time for a light lunch. He looked over the available sandwiches and then bought the least offensive combination.

He noticed a book with volumes about visual music and musical painting. These were hardly fresh associations but they nevertheless provided food for thought when well-researched and written. But he couldn't be buying books. He could not be filling up his suitcase. Tomorrow he would be looking at a nearly ten hour train ride...Vienna to Berlin.

He managed to sell three more copies of *Morrissey Masala* before calling it an afternoon before the evening panel. He made sure the money in his cash box was consistent with his number of sales. Don't spend it all in one place, he grimaced. Megan smiled as she also closed up shop. He would pay her for his sharing of the booth. He would pay her an amount that was more than the amount he had made in sales.

The hall where the panel was about to take place was considerably smaller than its Venice counterpart. About fifty people had already filled up the seats and the organizers were finding additional chairs.

He looked around the room and didn't see Megan or her friend Paul. He didn't really expect to see them at the panel...they were probably at some small jazz event. Or perhaps they were improvising sexually? No, Paul didn't seem like a sexual improviser.

The panelists were making their final preparations. Hans Werner Krieger, Anna Preshazer and George Burton were testing their mics. Another couple of minutes and they would be off and running.

There was an cash bar at the left side of the auditorium and he decided he could use a lager. There weren't any dark beers, only lagers.

He was wondering why these panels always had three panelists. Also, why was one panelist always British while the other two were based in the host city and country? But he didn't find this particularly strange... only consistent.

Were these panels a series? He doubted it. The Situationist International. the Venice Biennale, and now artists' publishing. There was only as much interconnection as somebody wanted to make.

Anna Preshazer led off and her presentation was terrific. Preshazer's role was to provide a history of artist-initiated publishing and she had spent her life and career researching this terrain. The artists' book was probably at least as old as Gutenberg but Preshazer began her presentation with two 1894 publications: Henri Toulouse Latrec's *Yvette Guilbert* (for her the first modern book in which both text and image were dealt with as a single clearly conceived object) and Paul Gauguin's manuscript and prints for his planned book *Noa Noa*.

Without getting stuck on why some books were artists' books while some were not, Preshazer's references were to books for which the images were not merely illustrations secondary to the text. Chagall, Matisse, Picasso, Delanuy-Terk, Malevich, Rauschenberg, Louise Bourgeois, Barbara Kruger... all these artists made artist's books.

Then Preshazer moved on to correspondence publishing...Ray Johnson and then a multitude of others. She touched upon correspondence networks....such as the Canadian Image Bank. She referred to Printed Matter in New York and Art Metropole in Toronto.

He felt like he was a part of something under discussion. He had been there. He had been a player.

For Preshazer, language especially poetic language could be present in artists' books but never dominant. For her and the artist book tradition she was outlining, literature and visual art rarely connected, although she revealed herself to be at least somewhat conversant of concrete poetry.

Ruth Wolf Rehfeld, he muttered out loud. The woman sitting to his right gave him a warning glance. Now the British George Burton took the mic which Preshazer had handed to him. Burton appreciated Preshazer's concise history which he reminded audiences was a history, meaning that it was not a future. People continued and would continue to publish artists monographs and *poetrie concrete*, but more and more online and not so much in a book object format. Burton was making a valid point to a degree as there certainly the volume of correspondence could only have increased since everybody and their dog now had internet domains. But he didn't appreciate Burton's false opposition between artists' books as art objects and electronic bulletins that were never printed out and then deleted from personal computers. He got the sense that George Burton did not like art galleries very much. Perhaps his favourite artist was Banksy, except how many galleries and their dealers did Banksy now have? Outsider art had always been big business. Up the individual and down the collective. Heard it all before, George. Next. His mind wandered and he recalled the Senator Helms NEA controversy of the late 1980s. He remembered an issue of the Village Voice where all the anti-Helms anti-censorship voices were contradicted by a computer hacker who proclaimed indifference to the NEA since art was now all on the net...on the worldwide web. Well, yes and then what? Mind you, this kid made this proclamation before everybody and their best friend was online.

More libertarianism masquerading as anarchism. But just maybe George Burton was one of those pseudo-leftists who considered art to be the property of the elitist one percent? Or maybe he was a person who preferred the screen to the pages? Whatever?

George Burton finished his presentation and then passed the mic to Hans Werner Krieger. Hans Werner Krieger cleared his throat and said Guten Abend to the audience. Then Hans Werner Krieger fell down to the floor and did not get up. His fall was identical to those of Terence Blackwood and Giuseppi Lametti. The security personnel at the Academy of Applied Arts now commanded everybody to leave the building in as close to single file as possible through the nearest side door. As he walked to the nearest underground he could already hear the sirens.

He hadn't slept well. There were gunshots in his dream. He woke up because he needed to pee and he did not wish to be shot. Usually a need to pee managed to insert itself into his dream narratives so he would rouse himself before actually peeing. But this time it was the approaching gunshots.

But this dream didn't make sense to him. He had never been in the same room as a gunman or sharpshooter during his entire life. He had been arrested for playing with firecrackers on the wrong day when he was thirteen, along with his boyhood friend John who loved sticking firecrackers up his ass and then daring his friend to light them. He had seen an obituary for his friend John a few months ago. He had a habit of browsing through obituary columns in analogue newspapers. He was sure it was the same person.

He ate his breakfast quickly but thoroughly and then checked out of the hotel. He would be able to catch some sleep on the long train ride.

He checked email and there was nothing important from home. Nobody had died. There were art openings that he perhaps would and perhaps wouldn't be attending if he were in Toronto. He liked to see

exhibitions when there wasn't a crowd and he more often than ever before never signed the guest book. He'd known too many artists who wanted to know what he thought of their art when he was still making up his mind.

*Making up his making up his mind making up his mind....*the train fell into a steady soothing rhythm. He could never get enough of European trains. He wondered about buying some sort of a pass... visiting a city in the afternoon...traveling again by night without particular destinations. Oh to be young again. He had managed to book an Air Bnb for three days in Berlin...he couldn't deal with Happy Hostel again. Too many noisy kids too many people who might steal from him, even if he did keep all his valuables in his locker.

He fell asleep. He had avoided his second cup of tea at breakfast so that he might sleep earlier. His sleep lasted just over an hour. He woke up and requested tea, with the bag in the cup. He opened his laptop again and decided to listen to Kate Bush's album *Hounds of Love*. He had never liked Kate Bush during the punk and even post-punk years because she was the diametric opposite of a punk. She had imagination, which is something that most people didn't have.

Imagination. Originality. Such modernist concerns. In the age of sampling in the age of stealing who cared about imagination and originality.

He did. Not that he would know an original idea if it bit him up the arsehole.

He finished with the first side of *Hounds of Love* and moved to Massive Attack. Not one album but various tracks. He started with his favourite song *Teardrop*, with guest vocalist Liz Fraser of Cocteau Twins. Along with the video he could read the song's lyrics. He had never known what Fraser was singing on this track... he liked the fact that it was meaningless gibberish. But it wasn't. She was singing *fearless on my breath*. He'd always thought she was singing *feel like summer pray*. Nevertheless, she had such a unique vocal style that it didn't matter what the fuck she was singing.

*Imagination, originality, modernism, shocking, copyright....*he started drifting off again. He could now hear Tracy Thorne singing *Protection* with Massive Attack and he noted the most un-James Brown usage of a James Brown sample.

What if his old band's catalogue had been more sample-able? Then he would always have little royalties or residuals coming in. But he had made so many mistakes when he was young. And now he was old. He checked the newsfeed. There was only a brief mention of the murdered panelist in Vienna. Hans Werner Krieger had been described as an academic specializing in correspondence art and multiples. He had been described as a big friendly bear of a man. He had left a wife named Helga and a son named Jakob. There wasn't anything more about him or his murder.

He tried not to think about gunshots, even when there hadn't been any gunshots.

He changed the music to something more background-oriented. He found an hour long link for Afro-psychedelic house 2019. This was a good link despite the occasional peace and love vibe lyrics but they did go with the territory. What did become of old punks anyway? They discovered opposites to punk...like Kate Bush and house music. More frequently they discovered country music...same three chords.

Or they kept playing the same old shit and becoming Brexiters. Donald Trump supporters. Why would be shocking to anybody that formal conservatism often led to political conservatism? Same old chords.

Same old suspicion of strangers meaning immigrants, same old louts with their lager lager lagers..

He knew he could not live in Vienna. Too much wiener schnitzel, too many apple streudels. too much meat. And for better or worse he was borderline carnivorous. But Berlin was still warmer to immigrants.

More culinary options. Thai, Indian, long time comfort foods.

He could live in Berlin. Except money was running out and how could he make more. He would receive another annuity payment on the fifteenth. So he would spend three days in Berlin and then try London.

Get there before Brexit happens. He emailed his friends Ethan and Rebecca. Hopefully they could put him up for a bit. They were video and film people and good company.

The train kept up a consistent rhythm until approaching Berlin. Here was the Haupt Bahnhof again. Berlin and also Vienna had such efficient transportation systems compared to Toronto. No halfway commenced and then painfully unfinished subway lines.

He put his laptop into his suitcase and waited for the train to arrive in Berlin.

When it did, he let other passengers walk ahead of him. He was not in a hurry. He know how to get to this Bnb without needing to ask directions.

As he walked toward the underground entrance he noticed two uniformed Polizei accompanying a man who appeared to be a Federal Border Guard. This guard and the two officers stood directly in his path. 'Adam Parker' the Border Guard asked to see his passport. He couldn't claim not to be Adam Parker. That was his name.

The Border Guard demanded that he accompany the two poloizei plus himself to an interrogation room. He did not resist. He did wish he had peed before the train arrived in Berlin. He now expected to be in the interrogation room for a long time. He had an inkling as to why.

Your name is Adam Parker?

Yes

You are a Canadian citizen?

Yes.

He had already surrendered his passport

You have been traveling around the European Union?

Yes

Where to?

Berlin, Venice, and Vienna.

Why?

To look at art, mostly

When are you returning to Toronto?

I don't know actually.

What does it say on your return ticket? I need to see your return ticket.

I don't have one, sir.

Why not?

I sold it to a friend who is returning from Berlin to Toronto.

Were you planning to stay in the European Union forever?

..... No

Then why don't you have a return ticket?

I don't have any special commitments in Toronto. I needed to get out of Toronto.

What do you do for a living?

Writing....video art.

What is video art?

An assemblage of images edited and then processed in a video editing system, I suppose.

Television?

No, not necessarily.

Do you read from your writing? Do you write books?

Yes, sir.

His last copy of *Morrissey Masala* was retrieved from his suitcase by one of the Polizei.

Have you read from this book while in the European Union?

Yes.

Where?

Motto Distribution, In Berlin.

Did you sell books at your reading at Motto Distribution?

.....Yes.

How many copies?

Two...three.

Well, which is it? How many copies?

Three.

What did you do in Venice?

I attended the Venice Biennale.

What did you do in Vienna?

I looked at art....and I attended an artists' book fair.

What did you do at this books fair? Were you selling your books.....this *Morrissey Masala*?

.....Yes.

How many copies did you sell?

Two.

Only two? How much did you sell your books for?

Twenty euros.

How much money did you make from selling these books?

One hundred euros.

Hand over the hundred euros, sir.

He obeyed the command.

I need to look at your computer. Is it in your suitcase?

He retrieved the laptop from his suitcase..

Can I see your phone, sir?

I didn't bring my phone.

What?

I didn't bring my phone, sir. I came to Europe for privacy.

Can I see your phone?

I told you I didn't bring my phone, I deliberately left it in Toronto.

Where did you dispose of your phone?

I left it in Toronto. I didn't bring my phone with me.

How did you contact people who you needed to contact?

Morning email. With my computer.

Where is your phone?

Toronto.

I doubt it. You are the only person who was present at all three of those panels where one of the panelists was shot. What does that suggest to you?

Coincidence, sir. Coincidence.

Bullshit. Bullshit. Adam Parker, we are holding you in custody in relation to the murders of Terence Blackwood, Giuseppi Lametta, and Hans Werner Krieger. Do you have anything to say at this point in time?

Yes. I had nothing to do with any of those murders. What was my motive? And what was my weapon?

Well, you tell us, Mr. Parker. You will tell us. No further questions, at this time.

The Border Agent and the two Polizei slammed the door. It locked automatically.

The interrogation room door was completely locked. He had no access to a washroom and this was likely to become a pressing issue.

The room was padded. He could hear no sound except for those in his head. The sounds in his head were not helping matters.

There was a chair. He could sit down. That was all he could do.

They had of course taken his laptop. Not that there was anything on it that would bolster their case.

Emails to Murray in Berlin, emails to Megan Coleman. Meet me at the panel at seven. He could not deny having attended the panels.

He presumed there was digital evidence...video documentation....of the panels and that his head was the only recurring head. Therefore he must be the killer...make that a serial killer?

What if the sniper had been positioned behind the camera?

What if the sniper had been the camera operator? A silent state of the art weapon in a video camera made as much sense as one in someone's phone.

Fucking phones. He had decided to travel without his phone. What sort of a weirdo does that?

He thought of a former associate in Toronto who didn't have a computer let alone social media presence.

A situation had arisen in which nobody could believe this man could not respond to emails or trace telephone calls.

The cops would ransack his laptop and there would be nothing there. He still had a Face Book account even though he had stopped using Face Book. Requesting that his Face Book account be terminated was too much bother. He had just stopped using it. Of course der Polezei would comb through it looking for evidence. What would they find? That his political sympathies did tend to be leftist and suspicious of what Emma Goldman dismissed as parliamentarism? That he indeed had FB' friends' who actually liked Donald Trump because Trump was preferable to other Wall Street shills? That he had an artistic history?

The Border Agent had asked him to define video art. So they would search his website, which he hadn't updated for months now. They would see some of his art. Most of his art was formalist. Many of his friends accused him of being ultimately apolitical despite the fact that he signed petitions.

Now he could make out a voice in the Berlin airport announcing a flight to Praha. Prague...he had earlier flirted with taking a train from Vienna to Prague but decided against it. The old section of Prague was supposed to be stunning to look at and just walk around in. Plus he had wanted to visit the Franz Kafka Museum but he later decided that he didn't want to.

He suspected his friend Murray had already used the return ticket to Toronto. So der polizei and their employers would not be able to obtain that ticket from Murray.

He remembered once being stupid enough to travel to the United States without a return ticket. Of course he was denied entrance.

Murray had always asked him why his art was so formalist and grid-defined. He had responded that there was always a grid lurking behind all supposedly free autonomous zones et cetera. Now he wanted to smirk at Murray and gloat him that he had told him so.

The Prague passengers were now presumably boarding their flight. He sighed and now attempted to exercise his only option. He attempted to fall asleep. He used a system of itemizing days of the outgoing year by their day of the year number and their day of the week. What did he do on Wednesday days 2,72,142,212, and 282? Day 352 had yet to occur. Now what did he go that was radical and actually interesting on the Thursdays which were days 3,73,143,213, and 283 as day 353 was yet to happen? He repeated this pattern until he did fall into a sleep.

He didn't know how long he'd been sleeping when the Border Guard and his two polizei associates aggressively burst into the interrogation room and returned his laptop.

You will now be flown to Toronto...one way. Your flight is an hour from now you can grab a snack. You will always have somebody observing you so don't try anything funny. This will be your life in Toronto.

You will never be alone although you will be lonely.

The polizei seized his arms and marched him to the waiting lounge for the next flight to Toronto. They allowed him to eat an apple streudel and a couple of muffins. Alcohol was verboten.

The Border Agent smiled at him, smirking that they would find his phone soon enough and then walked away, leaving him alone with his minders.

At Toronto's Pearson International Airport he was greeted by two plainclothes cops who escorted him to an anonymous sedan. Without making any conversation they drove him to his apartment in the west downtown part of the city.

His apartment was barely an apartment. More like a living room, a tiny kitchen area and a washroom. His bed was in the living room.

He pointed to his phone at his work table. *This is my phone*, he told the cops. See? His phone was in his apartment and not at the bottom of a lake or in some Viennese garbage can. The two cops didn't respond. They had been informed that he had trashed his phone containing incriminating evidence somewhere presumably in Vienna or among the train route to Berlin. They could think of no reason to doubt their superiors.

They handed his laptop to him and he set it up on the work table beside the phone.

He looked up at the ceiling in his living room and there was a new smoke detector. He knew this smoke detector was more than just a smoke detector.

Phone, laptop, synthesizer on another table re-connected to the laptop...all that a person under house arrest could need, along with his full case of books. He was going to be doing even more reading than he had previously.

He was permitted to go out as long as he was wearing a lavalier. Needless to say, the lavalier was wireless.

He could meet friends for tea and even moderate alcohol. Of course the conversations would be recorded.

He knew there was no way he could convince these two bottom of the pyramid cops that his phone that had been in Toronto all the time was like his phone, period.

The cops left him alone with the newly installed smoke detector.

He activated his synthesizer. He had missed playing music while overseas... he didn't realize how much he had missed it. Especially now, when there wasn't really much point in talking to other people.

He found a slow repeated pattern that he decided was worth saving. The remainder of his life would be a series or sequence of slow repeated patterns.

He was interrupted by the phone's ringing. He looked at the caller's identity and recognized the name Jane Leventhal. She was a painter and old friend who hadn't been in touch for a while. Jane was now leaving a message that if he was back in Toronto she would like to have breakfast with him. Tomorrow at the usual place, which was a breakfast café with waiters who were chronically asleep so there was never any pressure to inhale breakfast and make way for the next patrons.

He called Jane back and confirmed her arrangement. He made it clear to her that their conversation would be recorded so that if she had any big secrets she should refrain from passing them on to him.

He returned to his musical work in progress. He would be working on this new piece until it was suitable for posting. He decided to call this new piece *Smoke Detector*

Da da da da da dadada da da da da dadadada da da da da da dadada da..

He couldn't get rid of that fucking Mary J. Blige song that was stuck in his head.

No More Drama! Please please please, no more drama!

He'd had enough drama recently to last a lifetime. He realized that unless something significantly unexpected were to happen he would be bereft of drama for the remainder of his life. But no drama was preferable to some drama, since all drama he could imagine ranged from bad to worse.

He turned on the laptop so that he could access something other than Mary J. Blige and her melodramatic demand for no more drama. He found the polar opposite...Brian Eno's *Thursday Afternoon*...good for an ambient hour.

He couldn't remember whether or not it actually was Thursday. No, it was Wednesday. He had been flown home on the Tuesday, after being arrested or detained or whatever the verb on Monday. He thought of all the current and former Toronto people he had encountered during his briefer then intended vacation away from Toronto.

Eric Ralph, Murray and Karen, Daniel Lawrence, Megan Coleman....what did those people have to do with each other? Did any of them even know each other?

Nada. Absolutouly no connection to each other, let alone any of the murdered panelists.

Da da da da da dadada da da da da dadada.....the damn Mary J. Blige thing was still in his head *Thursday Afternoon* notwithstanding. Something less pleasantly ambient than the Eno album was necessary. Something not even ambient.....Grimes, she would do. Quebecois Kate Bush, although that was a lazy generalization.

Grimes' *Art Angel* concluded when it was time for him to meet Jane Leventhal. Jane would of course be asking him all about his trip, even though she knew they would be recorded. He wondered if the local laid back coffee shop had ordered a new smoke detector now that his patronage was impending.

Jane was outside finishing up a cigarette. She had relapsed from her plan to quit smoking. He felt like relapsing but he resisted.

He asked her about her recent activities before she could ask him about his.

She had a show coming up at her usual gallery but she was frustrated with her dealer. Her dealer could have sold a large painting at the recent art fair but he botched it. According to Jane, her dealer simply didn't try hard enough. So she was looking for another dealer.

Good luck, he told her. This city wasn't exactly crawling with good art dealers. There were a couple of dealers who were really curators....good at matching two or more artists but not at selling their work. They certainly knew the right collectors but were inept when it came to closing deals. There was another dealer who talked to much about the work. If you talk too much about a work of art it sounds like you're apologizing for it. Let the collector rhapsodize and then close that deal.

Of course it was now his turn to describe recent events. So he ran through the arrest or detention at the Haupt Bahnhof in Berlin and then he revisited the three panels. Each panel had three panelists and one was always British.

How odd, Jane thought. Well, the panels all had headphones with English translation. No, as far as he knew they were not a series.

He reiterated the three victims; names for her. Terence Blackwood (English), Giuseppi Lametti (Italian) and Hans Werner Krieger (Deutsch). He started to tell her about how Krieger was shot with the silent bullet just as he was about to speak when she cut in and informed him that Hans Werner Krieger was a war criminal.

What the fuck? Was that a motive? Were Lametti and Blackwood also fascists?

What was Jane on about? He asked her to check this on her phone, he of course not bothered to have brought his phone to a slacker café where his conversation would somehow be recorded by invisible police persons.

No, Jane had the wrong name. She was thinking of Hans Walter Kruger, who was a Heidegger scholar who had become much too enamored of Heidegger. She apologized to him and he accepted her apology. But did any of the murdered panelists have dubious or downright objectionable politics? Did that indeed have something to do with why some very slick sniper would take them out ?

He shook his head. Nobody takes academics so seriously that they would wish to kill them. Maybe tie them up and then gaffer-tape their mouths, Jane and he agreed.

They laughed and ordered another free caffeine fix. A group of alcoholic firemen were beginning to arrive and get pissed on their break. He remembered the firemen from his last meeting with Jane at this café. Their usual place.

Jane vaguely remembered Eric Ralph and vividly remembered Daniel Lawrence. *Hello, you're a famous artist well I'm a famous artist too we should hang out.*

Oh. She had almost forgotten to tell him that his and her friend Murray had returned to Canada and then immediately sublet his apartment and then flown to Vancouver.

Well, Murray needed Canadian health benefits but he didn't need Toronto. Because Toronto didn't need him.

He and Jane exchanged gossip about their sort of mutual friends who they would always be gossiping to each other about. None of these people were important. None of them would cause the surveillance tapes to become hot property.

Then the firemen started getting drunk and thus too loud for he and Jane to gossip further. So they settled their bill and departed in different directions.

After he had dried himself off after his morning shower he found himself staring at one of his paintings parked on the top shelf of his prime bookcase.

The painting was raspberry pink and sorbet orange with deliberate black drippings. The painting was now three to four years old. He had seen worse paintings during his lifetime, although he certainly was not a painter per se.

He decided that he would spend the afternoon painting. He confirmed that he would be reading from *Morrissey Masala* at a local 'alternative' bar the next evening and then visited into the nearest art supplies store. He bought two tubes of acrylic paint.....another sorbet orange and a rich mid-purple. These were his favourite colours today, for no reason other than the fact that he liked these colours. These were the colours that always caught his attention.

He bought an 8 x 14 canvas. Birchwood with ingrained patterns. The patterns would provide his painting with a structure. So, by a loose definition of the overworked term, his painting would be a readymade as its structure was pre-determined. Of course, he had to paint cleanly and accurately within the assigned structure.

He knew his painter friends, with one significant exception, all dismissed his paintings as the work of a smartass dilettante. They weren't even Sunday paintings...they were messy doodles despite their formalist intention. Actually their formalist intention made them look even sloppier than they really were. It wasn't as if he ever expected to be given a painting exhibition. That would've been beyond absurd, although some truly terrible painters had been getting shows for as long as he could remember.

No, he had a different plan. He had once entertained the idea of depositing his paintings onto the properties of some certain local art-community big shots. He had thought about recruiting someone who could be his chauffeur for this endeavor but nobody came to mind. He would need a chauffeur and a videographer... someone to park their car anonymously and catch the panicky reactions of the bewildered **homeowner.**

He thought of a certain hometown dealer who would seriously loathe the painting he was now competing... Malcolm Grisdale, proprietor of a local gallery with very international pretensions. Grisdale was the brother of a boy named Billy Grisdale who made his life miserable in grade six. Billy Grisdale had been as asshole who had grown up to be a cokehead playboy; Malcolm had been the relatively harmless older brother. But he had re-encountered Malcom at a swanky art party he'd managed to get himself invited to last summer and Malcom had now seemed to him a pompous little snit.

Plus Malcolm Grisdale had terrible politics. He advocated the elimination of public funding for all forms of art that could not obviously compete in the hypothetical market. Malcom was a neo-liberal with Anglophile mannerisms...the worst possible combination.

So who could drive him to Grisdale's Rosedale mansion and then park the car where he could watch the pseudo-dealer break out in gives upon discovering the painting on his porch? He couldn't think of a co-conspirator. Jane Leventhal perhaps, he had once run this idea by her and she'd laughed. But Jane only had access to her brother's car when her brother didn't need it. Who else was there?

He couldn't drive...let alone own a car.

Forget it, he looked at his canvas which was already dry. The cops may not have equipped his ankle with one of those electronic bracelets, but they still had their methods. A wealthy man like Malcom Grisdale would no doubt have a state of the art smoked detector or two or three.

Forget it indeed. Sometimes, actually most of the time, ideas were just ideas.

He made tea and checked email prior to his daily shower. There were no significant messages, only a couple of art openings for artists he didn't care about one way or the other.

He googled the European Panelist Murder Investigation. No one had been arrested or even questioned since himself

He guffawed. Interpol and their local polizei must still be searching lakes and marshes and Bahnhofs for his phone. He must have had a phone. What kind of person doesn't have a phone, or at least carry it with them everywhere they visited.

He knew enough people who even took their phone into the washroom with them. They get serious important calls while they're trying so hard to dump a big cathartic turd. They answer the phone while having sex. Wasn't there an American president like that? No, it was a horror movie director, so anxious to disprove the truism that such directors made such movies as a result of their sexual repression.

He wondered if the Vienna polizei were conducting a detailed search of the Prater amusement park. Which of the many rides might he have indulged himself with? Which stupid pub had he eaten and drank in?

None, you fools. You assholes...none. He hadn't even taken his phone to the EU....he hadn't needed it so he hadn't brought it.

You are barking up the wrong tree, you stupid pack of predictable dependable dogs.

Speak of the devil...his phone rang. He looked at the caller identification and the caller was from the medical centre across the street. Prior to his European misadventures he had subjected himself to blood testing and now the centre wanted him to come in. His doctor would be available in the later afternoon. This gave him time to do his laundry and mull about what could possibly have turned up in one of his blood samples.

He remembered to bring his phone to the centre. There would be a lengthy waiting time as Dr. Bush was a very busy man indeed.

Well, if there's something rotten in the blood best find out as soon as possible. Yeah yeah yeah and then what? He was getting older....shit does happen.

He brought his phone to the medical centre as he would have to kill time. He was already hearing Christmas carols which he despised. Couldn't the medical centre play furniture music? Wallpaper music, bathtub music he used to call it. Music that was intended to be in the background and which had nothing to do with communication. After being subjected about five too many Christmas carols he was called into the waiting room. After another ten minutes Dr. Bush greeted him by suggesting that he commence booking the undertaker. Dr. Bush had a peculiarly macabre humour.

He and the doctor traced his past few visits to the medical centre. Then Dr. Bush re-read the report he had been given which had prompted the receptionist to call his patient in. There were scribbles about some not so benign infection on his back.

Well, he didn't have any sort of infection on his back. He had come in to renew a prescription for the pills that supposedly regulated his expended prostrate and incidentally hampered his ability to achieve an erection. And he had come in to give blood samples. The doctor had never examined his back...well wait a minute. Medical concerns about someone named Alex Parker had been written onto a report sheet for Adam Parker. What the fuck?

Dr. Bush now laughed and commented on preserving confidentiality. But he had no idea who Alex Parker was, although he used to be mistaken for a bad writer named Alan Parker. So now he was free to go. Since the season was approaching all too quickly he wished his doctor a merry Christmas. Dr. Bush snorted. He liked his doctor...the man was probably an atheist. He grabbed a Thai dinner at the local mall and then prepared for his reading event. He would meeting his published who would be supplying copies of *Morrissey Masala*.

He spiffed himself up for the book reading. Not too spiffy of course. He wouldn't want to create any impression that he was making money from *Morrissey Masala*.

He would be sharing the stage with two other writers. One was Dennis Chen, who had written a book about twentieth century composers and their relationship with the visual arts. The other was Veronica Tennant whose book focused on queerness in pop music.

He would be going last. Was he supposed to be the star or something? Perhaps a trigger?

Dennis Chen was slim and very sexy. Far too young for him. Or rather, he was far too old for Dennis Chen.

Dennis began reading about modernist behemoths or icons like Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern. he tied these composers to their predecessors and antagonists like Ricard Strauss and Gustav Mahler, and as well the Viennese secessionist movement in art. The early nineteenth century was so volatile, not unlike the early twenty-first century.

He wanted Dennis Chen to move forward from the modernist ideologues like Schoenberg and his students. What did young Dennis have to say about gay American composers such as Aaron Copland and Samuel Barber? And not to mention Cage.

But perhaps he was being too literal about this being a reading of queer writers. Dennis certainly seemed queer but sexual preference didn't seem to be that important in his book. Music always had the option of being strictly about itself...especially instrumental music.

John Cage was interesting here as his partnership with the dancer Merce Cunningham had always been an open secret, but Cage disdained all forms of nationalism. Did this mean that he disdained all forms of personal identification? He thought of a play he had seen a couple of years ago in which Cage and Cunningham were portrayed as a generic middle aged gay couple who rarely had sex with each other but were compulsive park sex enthusiasts. He doubted that Cage and Cunningham were as such. He doubted that they were interchangeable with so many generic couples that he knew and tended to avoid. Dennis Chen finished his reading and was succeeded by Veronica Tennant. She was affable in manner. She did not seem like an academic. He had expected her to be more academic but this wasn't particularly an issue.

Her knowledge of queer pop music seemed to begin in the seventies. But what about earlier icons and practitioners? Where was Little Richard? What about Billy Eckstine or Bessie Smith? Ma Rainey? Of course the seventies were important.. Elton and Freddie and disco. But where was punk? The word punk is itself queer, despite so many of the assholes who called themselves punks. And then there was Bowie and Morrissey....Bowie may have been feigning queerness as a marketing gimmick but he certainly opened up space when space was sorely needed. Morrissey may well be asexual and right now he was a borderline Nazi but The Smiths had been so right for so many queer not only boys who rightly preferred their bedsitters to a pseudo-hedonist heteronormative late capitalist entertainment industry and nightlife. And now it was time for *Morrissey Masala*. He selected passages that focused on how much Morrissey had meant to not only Northern bedsitters and to not only boys who were highly literate in the cultural context of an gleefully illiterate merry go round and how Morrissey was not painfully earnest confessional crap but very very very funny.

He had about half of the crowd's attention. Others were talking among themselves..no doubt about Morrissey's Brexit-sim and Islamophobia and all the rest. He momentarily lost his concentration... thinking about Johnny Marr's reaction to a stupidly rumoured Smiths reunion.

And who would be playing guitar? Nigel Farrage?

There was no Q&A session afterwards, for which he was grateful. After all, this was not an academic event. It was not a panel. None of the others were mysteriously shot. He wasn't shot. Life would go on. He didn't see anybody he knew, not that he was really looking. He didn't wish to have a drink with either Dennis Chen or Veronica Tennant.

He woke up and checked email. All of his feeds were about a plane crash....a plane traveling from Tehran via the Ukraine suddenly crashed. The majority of the passengers were Canadian and there was a large number of casualties. Fatal casualties, not just injuries.

This plane crash happened in temporal proximity to the American president's assassination of a top tier Iranian military official and a retaliatory Iranian missile attack, with no fatalities, on an Iraqi base housing American troops.

Was the plane crash caused by some inexplicable technical failure or were sinister military forces at work? Did Iran do it? Is Canada enough of an American ally to be a target here?

This wasn't making sense. Why Canada? Why not Canada? It wasn't as if Canada was neutral.

He had long wearied of Middle Eastern politics but he felt guilty about his weariness.

He had no emails of importance other than Jane Leventhal wanting another breakfast date. They had such dates seven or eight times a year.

Sure, he responded. Let's do it. When?

Social media was all about Trump and his warmongering. Trump had a few social media defenders. A couple of the names he recognized as being those of old punks. He snorted. How predictable. So many fools who used to consider themselves anarchists were now right wing libertarians. Johnny Rotten was now a Los Angeles denizen who loved Trump. Forty plus years ago he had been against every thing hippie. Being anti-war was for hippies. Wasn't Lydon also anti-abortion?

The names he recognized weren't famous like Rotten or Exene Cervenka..they were locals who never went beyond being locals. But then he had written a book centered around Morrissey, the man who had gone from being charmingly affectionate about all that is English to being blatantly racist and protectionist and hostile to everybody and everything not English.

How does a plane suddenly go down without there being noise? Something inside the plane...so the plane crash was some sort of inside job?

Terence Blackwood, Giuseppi Lametti and Hans Werner Krieger had all been taken down with no noise. How the fuck was this possible? Well, some body or somebodies had silent weapons? Exactly what kind of silent weapons? The idea of muzzled guns in smart phones wasn't working for him.

He was the only person who had been to all three panels and he hadn't been the sniper the murderer the assassin. There must have been three different killers? Who and then why?

Were Blackwood, Lametti, and Krieger political targets? Was there some other commonality aside from them being male-gendered persons on panels related to art world art discourse art spectacle?

What if there was another linkage between the three men? What if they shared some horrible personal habit or trait?

What if the three men were pedophiles?

Why did that possibility even occur to him?

He googled for updates on the strange case of the assassinated art panelists. There were none. Some events just happen and then quickly lose their currency. Social media has caused what is current and what is ancient to become even more exaggerated. It happened yesterday so it is yesterday. It is too yesterday to talk about.

The present tense quickly banishes the past tense while preventing the future tense from formulating. Yes, and then what?

He decided to see a movie. He took in a documentary about Roy Cohn...Joe McCarthy's legendary horrible lawyer. Cohn was indeed a monster. How much of his monstrosity was due to him being a closet case? Roy Cohn was so of the fifties.....Cohn, Joe McCarthy, J. Edgar Hoover. Roy Cohn was a mentor to Donald Trump, who apparently was once a Democrat and not a homophobe. Now Trump is a homophobe who is dependent upon the support of the Christian right.

The Christian right used to pretend they weren't anti-Semitic because of some bullshit connection between Israel and The Rapture. Now they were being more and more blatantly anti-Semitic.

He wished he has chosen another movie. The Roy Cohn doc was well presented but the its information was old news to him. So why had he chosen this movie? Confirmation? Just a feeble excuse to get out of the house, or off the home computer?

He went to a local bistro, ate a token meal, and drank too much. It wasn't as if he had anything important to do tomorrow.

"The plane was shot down"

Reuters....Visible headline at local drugstore.

Later on he read that the Canadian Prime Minister stated that the shooting down was most likely accidental.

This situation was already out of control. What about the passengers, for Christ's sake?

He remembered arguing with his ex about 9/11. His ex said well they were all suits, weren't they? No they weren't. They were people not just artists working in that building.

Ideology should not force itself on non-believers. Et cetera.

He had been reading about modernist composers and their manifestos. Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Berg, Webern, Sibelius. Et Cetera. Who is now on whose side? Who has violated rule whatever number of one of the other's manifestos?

Manifesto..one of those words that keeps recurring. Post-modernism is too relativist... well, of course. So post-post modernism is that not modernism? In the visual arts as well as musical composition and performance? To be other than a journeyman one needs a manifesto.

He'd deduced years ago that postmodernists were not unlike session musicians. *I have this style down and I have this style down how can they be ideologically opposed since I have mastered both of them.*

But then session players were akin to actors. What cliché do you want well here it is.

He thought of fifties abstractionists and their pugilism. He thought of how these painters, so many of whom declared themselves anarchists, were pawns for 'free world' Western propaganda. In America one is free to paint art about nothing other than itself. Wilde and Cocteau and Stravinsky advocated this aestheticism in opposition to puritanical ideological tyrannies. Now one was free to be oppositional to social realism, as long as the art wasn't about anything.

He thought about macho modernists and then other contemporary painters. Rothko had always tended to be categorized alongside Jack The Dripper. But Pollock is performative and aggressive. Rothko is eloquent. Rothko is not blowing his horn he is conveying his own exquisite imagination. He recalled spending so much time staring at a series of Rothkos at the Art Gallery of Ontario that a security guard had to alert him to the passage of time. Yes, Rothko was a mystic. He went mad looking for even further perfection than that which he had already achieved. He was morose and troubled. Geniuses tend to be that way et cetera.

Genius is a word nobody used anymore. It's such a white Western concept. The word has long been problematized, along with originality and expressionism. Rothko could ultimately been counted with the expressionists because one could see evidence of the artist's hand with his canvases. The hand of the artist had yet to be eliminated or transcended.

Eliminated by what? AI? We're not there yet, he groaned as he had to pee again. Drinking too much near bedtime. weren't those days over? Genius... he snorted. The expressionists loved free jazz and worshipped dissonance. He thought of that Laird Cregar movie...*Hanover or Hangover Square*. Not really noir but rather very Gothic. It's supposed to be set in London one can tell by the fog machine. The Laird

Cregar character hits a divinely dissonant chord and then mutates into Jack The Ripper. Yes, modernism is the cause of both murder and war. And then what?

Before calling it a night he checked email. Jane Levenson wanted to push back their breakfast date. This was good as he had only done one painting since their last date. Jane was always teasing him about whether or not he had been painting. It wasn't as if he was really a painter, for Christ's sake. But he hadn't made plans for the next day. Perhaps painting would be a good means of at least killing time.

He woke up. He cleaned his teeth. He made tea. He took a shower. He made more tea. He checked his email. He found nothing stimulating or disturbing. He ate breakfast. He made plans. He picked a movie. He read about composers in Stalinist Russia. He went to the movie which was a murder mystery parody. He enjoyed the movie. He thought one of the actors was sexy. He decided to visit the nearest bathhouse. He took drugs. He had sex with five different men. He gave four blowjobs and modeled underwear for an underwear enthusiast. He ate Thai food. He walked home and listened to music with the drugs still in effect. He listened to an Afro Psychedelic House 2019 music mix. He listened to *Pearls Girl* by Underworld which was so nineties. He loved the rap beginning with Korea Korea The Reverend Al Green. He nodded off. He had to pee. He went back to sleep. He woke up. He did his morning to noon routine. He bought paints and a canvas. He chose lime sorbet green and raspberry red on an 11 x 14 birch wood canvas. He followed the patterns. He made another semi-readymade painting. He wondered what to do with his new and old paintings. He thought about giving one of them to his painter friend Jane. He remembered acting insensitively to his friend William shortly prior to William's HIV-related death. He commanded himself to die. He again commanded himself to die. He knew he had to get out of the house. He decided to do an art walk. He looked at portraitive paintings. He looked at an ecological-themed video installation. He looked at abstract paintings which weren't really abstract when you stood right up against the paintings. He thought these were the best art works he'd seen so far today. He decided to call it a day. He ate Chinese dinner. He went home and now read about composers in Third Reich. He thought about artists whose work he loved and who had despicable politics but he didn't dwell on the subject too long because that subject is one of those hopeless cul de sacs. He read himself to sleep. He woke up and cleaned his teeth. He swallowed vitamin tablets. He made tea. He skipped his shower. He emailed his publisher wondering if there were any new developments for *Morrissey Masala*. He listened to his publisher ranting about all the successful artists and dealers his publisher hated. He agreed that Malcom Grisdale was a total asshole. He pretended his ear was sore so he could get off the phone. He looked at the ceiling and focused on the second smoke detector. He gave the fuck off sign to whoever was spying on him through that smoke detector. He wondered if any of the rooms he had enjoyed himself in at the bathhouse were equipped with smoke detectors. He guessed that they all were. He remembered that a lengthy documentary about old Toronto punks for which had been interviewed was scheduled to play this evening at a renovated classic cinema. He thought about going and then changed his mind. He reminded himself how much he detested stupid old punks. He noted that an anti-war demonstration would be happening outside the American embassy on the coming weekend. He decided that he should go but then reminded himself about his history of crowd-phobia. He chastened himself for being apolitical. He knew all too well that the most constructive way for him to contribute to a better world was to not impede movement by people whose voices needed to be heard whose issues needed to be addressed et cetera. He concluded that the best contribution he could make to a better world would be to commit suicide. He decided that he still had some life in him yet. He wanted a drink but that it was still too early. He decided to go see a documentary about Merce Cunningham. He decided that it was breathtaking to watch these dance performances in 3-D but he wished there had been more gossip about Cunningham and Cage. He decided to eat dinner at a local bistro where one of the waitresses also worked in special effects. He had an extra beer too many since business was slow and the waitress was chatty. He decided to make a breakfast date with Jane and give her one of his new paintings. He would spend the evening trying to decide which one of the two. He decided that either he should give his paintings to his friends or, since he didn't really have many friends,

find some kind of performative outlet for the paintings. He had always wanted to do a performance piece called *Tape's Last Crap* but he reminded himself that Beckett's estate would object. He decided to listen to his favourite wallpaper music that he never really had to listen to. He fell asleep.

He dried himself off following a shower and shampoo. He checked his email and nothing was urgent. He googled Art Panel Murders hoping for updates. He didn't find any updates. He had been hoping that there had been additional art panel murders because now of course he would have an alibi proving that he had been nowhere in the vicinity of these murders. He was disappointed that there had been no further art panel murders. He wondered what the motives could have been. He speculated that the three male panelists might have shared an unhinged lover. He had been unsure of those panelists sexual orientation. He had guessed that Terence Blackwood was gay but perhaps Professor Blackwood was rather a metrosexual. He had pegged Giuseppi Lametti and Hans Werner Krieger for being straight. Krieger was straight because it had said so in the papers, not that this meant he was straight. He didn't wish for the three gentleman to have shared an unstable female lover but a revelation of this evidence would at least theoretically clear his record. He would now be free to smash the additional smoke detector. He now remembered a fire scare in his building seven plus years ago. He recalled a fire in the neighboring hardware store and the smoke had entered his building on a much warmer than usual November morning. He had groaned when Internet trolls quickly began posting eulogies for the hardware store. He switched off his computer and went about buying groceries. He entered the food and vegetable store three blocks away as he had to buy fresh lettuce. He noted that a kitchen worker whom he'd had sex with on more than a few occasions was on shift today. He acknowledged the kitchen worker who smiled back. He resisted temptation to ask the man when his break would be occurring and could they perhaps have a matinee. He purchased his rabbit food and then walked to a smaller less expensive variety store. He ate his cereal and felt pain in his lower left gums. He would be visiting the dentist in a few days and he was not looking forward to this appointment. He wanted to travel somewhere but the dental expenses would make a travel difficult in addition to his agreement with Interpol to remain grounded in Toronto. He thought of looking at art but no current exhibitions particularly intrigued him. He thought about a movie but his eyes were a bit too tired. He had a nap and then began reading about Hollywood composers with serious classical aspirations or pretensions or whatever, Many of those composers were of course German and East European refugees from the Second World War. He thought of how his father had served in a medical unit as his skills were medical and his eyesight was weak. He thought of how his mother passed six days after 9/11. He thought of parallels and differences between 9/11 and the accidental take down of a Ukrainian plane traveling between Iran and Toronto. He finished a chapter in his book and began listening to music. He couldn't think of a specific piece of music he wished to hear so he selected Steve Reich's *Music For Eighteen Musicians*. He found this piece alternatively mesmerizing and comfortably ambient. He recalled an art exhibition at Haus der Kunst in Munich four years ago now. He thought this Post War Art Exhibition curated by Okwui Enwesor was probably the most satisfying museum experience of his life. He had appreciated the rich blending and juxtaposition of European postwar artists and their Japanese and Latin American and African and North American counterparts. He remembered the guards who were so suspicious of him when he needed to pee at closing time. He remembered that he needed to do his laundry. He found a working machine and then walked over to the nearby bookstore. He found the same number of copies of *Morrissey Masala* on the shelves as there had been the previous week. He ran into a former schoolmate while carrying his laundry back home. He had a nice chat with the gentleman but was relieved when the gentleman did not ask him if he wished to have tea or something stronger. He again searched for updates regarding the Art Panel Murders but there were none. He wondered if this would become a semi-cold case with his own movements being monitored for the rest of his life. He ate dinner and considered going to a former friend's art opening but decided not to. He thought the weather looked threatening but there was only a

brief flourish of lake effect wet snow. He read for a while and then turned off the lights so that he could fall into an extremely satisfying deep sleep.

After a long mid-temperature shower, he got dressed and brewed another cup of tea. Snow was in the forecast but the sky was completely blue. Typical Environment Canada, he muttered to himself.

When he returned from the kitchen he registered two uniformed policemen standing in his doorway.

Adam Parker. You are under arrest for committing malicious damage to the property of Malcom Grisdale.

The two cops grabbed his arms after letting him place his teacup on the nearest desk. He laughed.

This isn't funny, Mr. Parker. You have deposited two paintings on the property of Malcolm Grisdale who is a serious art dealer with zero tolerance for amateurs.

He laughed again. The larger of the two cops now poked him with some sort of stick. He stopped laughing.

Adam Parker anything you say can be held against you. That includes laughing.

He let the cops march him into their sedan. He realized that since he'd thought about leaving paintings on Grisdale's property therefore he must have done it. He had no idea who had actually done it, but obviously somebody had.

His rhythm became military despite his being held by the two cops.

do think think do do think think do do think think do do think think do

think do do think think do do think think do do think think drink do you drink think do you think drink do I
no I do not I did not I did not someone did I did not do think therefore do do therefore think do not think I
did not do....

The cops shoved him into the backseat and drove to their precinct. He did not laugh.

