

Datura

#18 | 08_25



BARNES - DIAMONDPOLOUS - GREY - POLLACK
- THT - WOLAK - ZABLE - ZHENG

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Shapes of the Disappeared 31 to 35
poems by Christopher Barnes

Shapes of the Disapeeared 31

Mannequins in corporate windows.
Busker whickers saxophone.

Canescent lazy daisy four-ply,
On fingerless glove

Rucks around placard.

Shapes of the Disapeeared 32

Peckish magpie toddles.
Stained filter-tip rolls.

Beige azlon dangles -
Fit-and-flare midi

Reclines at bus shelter.

Shapes of the Disapeeared 33

Wersh niff of doughnuts.
Caterwauls tangle in Britpop.

Russet silkline,
Funnel-collared blouse

Swirls on plaza waltzer.

Shapes of the Disappeared 34

Low-lit roadhouse foyer.
Bucket seats, tables, dribbles on cups.

Polynesian Hawaiian shirt -
Frond, marigold, goldfinch,

Tightens broadsheet under arm.

Shapes of the Disappeared 35

Puginesque basilica, mackerel sky.
Argentine cladding on high-rise.

Thermoplastic sheeny yellow
Padded overcoat,

Glides along scaffolding rail.

enculé

par Antoine THT

extrait de « Bukowski n'a jamais fait ça »

j'ai fais du mieux au premier jour
oooh hisse enculééé
luttant contre les restes d'une nuit balaise
oooh hisse enculééé
pour prouver ma valeur à l'effort
oooh hisse enculééé
luttant contre la troupe d'une nuit balaise
oooh hisse enculééé
naturels pour accomplir l'effort
oooh hisse enculééé
et la première nuit à m'attarder
oooh hisse enculééé
avec les boss au bout les aider
oooh hisse enculééé
me vendant telle une pute engagée
oooh hisse enculééé
à tout prix ma valeur intégrée
oooh hisse enculééé

planter des piquets sans tiquer
enfoncés à coup d'masse à la masse
gueule de bois aux abois
plantage de pieux sans pieu

pas à développer mes muscles pectoraux
oooh hisse enculééé
grands comme des vagins
oooh hisse enculééé
mais à exercer mes maigres biceps
oooh hisse enculééé
étendus comme des pénis
oooh hisse enculééé
le soleil a cramé ma peau
oooh hisse enculééé
transformée en cuir tanné
oooh hisse enculééé
afin de mieux m'emplir de forces
oooh hisse enculééé
tel Kalel face à l'astre solaire
oooh hisse enculééé
et rayonner torse nu encasquetté
oooh hisse enculééé

The Rat

by Huina Zheng

Winter's here. A rat fell into the rice jar. When Mom went to get the grains, she found it—belly bloated, paws scraping the sides but getting nowhere. Dad said it served the thing right. Ate too much, got stuck. I trapped it in a wire cage and brought it to Coal, our black dog. She was lying beneath the wooden bed where my brother died.

Every night, rats ran through the house. Under the bed. In the wardrobe. Near the stool. Across the table. One afternoon, I found a nest under the bed. Pink, blind pups curled in torn cloth, squirming like tiny hearts. The next day, a worker at Dad's brick factory got electrocuted. Dad rushed to get a government official to sign off on "death by overwork." The man's family showed up a week later, clothes patched and worn. They didn't argue.

Mom set traps, bought poison. The rats didn't fall for it. If anything, they got louder. Like they were mocking her. One rat (I think it was the king) even dragged off a chick—revenge, maybe. Next morning, we found bloodied down on the dining table. Like the remains of some dark ritual.

Now the fat rat in the cage spots Coal and panics. The bars hold. Coal bares her teeth. The moment the latch clicks, she lunges, clamps down, shakes hard. Blood drops fall, one by one. That red makes me think of the ghost story tied to our makeshift

house. The woman who lived here before was eight months pregnant when the family planning officers came. They forced an abortion. She came back bleeding, and never stopped. I wonder if she still drifts through the house, sniffing for blood, stilling looking for the bones of the baby she never got to hold.

Tobacco Dust

by Huina Zheng

When he stepped onto the balcony for a smoke, he noticed a couple arguing on the street below. Their voices pierced the thick heat of the afternoon, rising all the way to the fourth floor. He tilted his head, listening. Not because he was nosy. And not because he was unusually sensitive to conflict (though he could easily distinguish tones of rage, grievance, and despair). He simply wanted to finish his cigarette in peace.

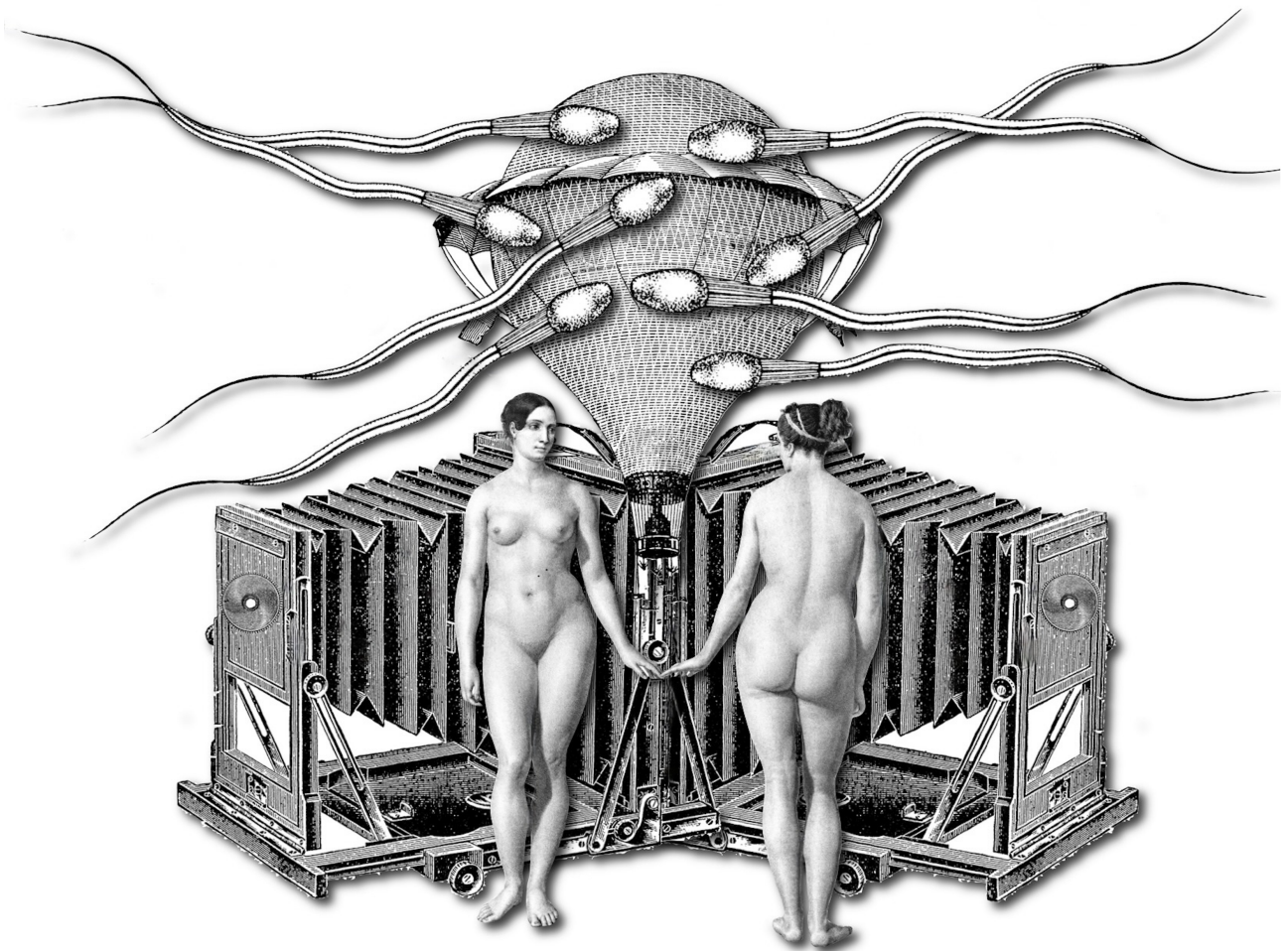
As the flame touched the tip, the drama below continued. The long-haired girl shouted, "I don't want to hear it!" while the boy with glasses gripped her shoulders, urgently explaining something. The wind shredded their voices into fragments, and the sun beat down like a spotlight. The patch of shade was too small. Their movements slowed, as if they were two ice creams melting under a blazing sun—thick, sticky, and collapsing into each other.

He stared at the girl's swaying face. Her hair blew into her open mouth. A sudden impulse gripped him. He saw his own hand rise

and strike. *Smack!* The crack of the slap turned her head. His hand rose again, as if it no longer belonged to him. He grabbed her hair, forced her to face him, and struck again—harder. *Still not enough*, a voice inside whispered.

Then the girl looked up at him, and her face came into focus: it was his late mother. Not as she had looked in old age, but young again, in a white blouse, her hair braided in pigtails. The boy turned too, flashing a grin. A gold tooth glinted in the sunlight. That gold tooth—he knew it well.

A shiver ran through him. Sweat soaked his back. The balcony railing felt suddenly solid under his palms. In his hand, the cigarette had crumbled. Tobacco threads slipped through his fingers, falling like dust.



A Dream Deepening into Delight by Bill Nowak

The Blast Door

by Frederick Pollack

It was shut for so long that they
taped memos, slogans, attempted humor
to it, as to all
the walls. And
despite regulations, porn -
towards the end hand-drawn, devotional.
Overall the tone shifted,
from executive to hysterical
and cruel; one needn't despair
as long as one can invent
an enemy from those around
one. And when no one was left
to purge, time
itself, with its yellow Sharpie,
edited; shredded. Yet at no point did
these skeletons open
the door (or perhaps those who wished to
died first). One could praise
their obedience to orders,
can imagine a faith
that someday it would
open. I so praise and imagine,
I the defining explosion, the poisoned wind.

Talky

by Frederick Pollack

In the last film of the franchise,
the zombies suddenly reveal
that at least some of them
can talk beyond that overfamiliar moan.
First a compliment
to the female lead about a bracelet. Then
almost an apology for trying to eat the star.
The climax is a long speech,
slow and hysterical, through an ill-fitting jaw,
by a decayed professor. "Don't assume
the hegemony of a virus!!
Or that *my* brain is rotten," it shouts.
"Have you examined your own,
lately? And you'll note that I'm spokesperson for
this tranche of the hungry anonymous throng
behind me. There are a few former
billionaires among us, and many
lawyers trying to regain their wealth and power
but who will probably be denied
standing. So guidance for
the masses has returned
to its traditional, one might say natural source,
the INTELLECT!" With this cry, the thing shatters.
Undismayed, the others advance towards the living,
who by now have learned to aim for
the head. Reviews of the film abruptly
terminate the meme of the "walking dead."
Future apocalypses implicate nobody.

1904: Mishap at the Fair

By DC Diamondopolous

Today, Aloysius O'Leary picked the wrong pocket. From the tippy-top of the Ferris wheel at the St. Louis World's Fair, he watched blue-coated coppers weave around fairgoers at the crossroads of Skinker and Ceylon.

With over fifteen-hundred structures and tens of thousands of people, he thought they'd never nab him or his accomplice. No problems all week, but if separated, they'd meet at the Ferris wheel.

Not only could Gertrude pick pockets, but she could steal pearls from a woman's neck and stickpins from a man's tie. She was also a wisenheimer, selfish, plain-looking, too tall, but gosh dang-it, he was falling for the dame.

His mishap had occurred on the Pike. The man in a frock coat and silk hat looked like he ate diamonds and shat twenty-four-karat gold-nuggets. An easy mark, he must have been important. Who else strolled the Pike with an entourage of fart catchers? Aloysius slipped in among them.

Hordes of people meandered along the midway. A barker shouted, "Step right up! See the hoochie-choochie dancers!" They passed the Apache exhibit where Geronimo signed photographs. Down the middle of the lane, acrobats in yellow and red leotards tumbled and somersaulted. An elephant lifted her trunk and trumpeted,

astonishing spectators. A brown-skinned man, bedecked in jeweled beads and shiny bracelets, rode a camel decked with multicolored tassels. The smell of roasted hotdogs added to the jubilee.

Calculating the ideal moment, Aloysius dipped his nimble fingers into the rich man's back pocket.

"Thief!" someone yelled.

Aloysius skedaddled across the Pike. He barreled past the Grand Basin, and the exhibits of Electricity and Machinery. Across from the Boiler House, he paid fifty cents and rode the Observation Wheel.

Mesmerized by the grandeur of the fair, all sixty people in the wooden car paid no mind to Aloysius. He removed his straw hat, deftly peeled off his black wig and mustache, then stuffed the fake hair into the pocket of his reversible jacket, (which he turned inside out), and slid into a light-gray coat.

The ride stopped. The gate opened. He spotted Gertrude.

She had the nerve to be eating the popular sensation—a hamburger—not in a restaurant, like a civilized woman, but dawdling in the open and chewing like a horse.

"Lots a coppers for a pickpocket," Gertrude said, licking her fingers. "I want to see those naked dusky Igorots everyone's in a dither about." She sauntered toward the Philippine exhibit.

Aloysius wanted to wring her skinny neck but got distracted by how her fanny swayed under her long green skirt.

She turned and batted her eyelashes. "Coming?"

He yearned to toss up her petticoats and run his fingers down her long shapely drumsticks.

Annoyed and smitten, Aloysius followed.

They passed the exhibit of Mbuti pygmies from Africa and the Acoma Indian encampment.

They continued along the Laguna de Bay, beyond the Walled City to the Luzon Village and into the Philippine Exhibit. Aloysius and Gertrude stared goggled-eyed at Igorot men in skimpy loin cloths, who pounded drums, and danced in circles, while other Igorots cooked the carcass of a dog over a pit.

"My God, they're savages!" Gertrude exclaimed, then stomped off.

Catching up to her, Aloysius said, "That's why everyone wants to see them. Let's pick here tomorrow." He saw a group of coppers.

"Officers!" Gertrude shouted.

What the hell was she doing!

Two coppers stopped.

"What's the brouhaha about?" she asked them.

Aloysius turned his back and listened.

"Been a kidnapping," a copper said. "Four-year-old. Tan sweater. Names Jimmy." Hearing this, Aloysius and Gertrude left.

"Kidnapping's worse than pickpocketing," Aloysius said, relieved.

"Of course, bonehead. That many cops couldn't be after you."

"Bonehead? You're the one who sashayed up to the cops with a load of stolen loot in your bag." To his surprise and delight,

Gertrude took his arm.

Strolling past the Galveston Flood Exhibit, they arrived at the Pike. With no worry of capture, Aloysius relaxed.

They headed to the Temple of Mirth, a funhouse of mirrors with a three-story circular slide. Before they entered under the huge gaping clown-face, Gertrude let go of Aloysius's arm.

Up ahead, a child wailed, struggling to get away from his father.

"Spoiled brat," Aloysius huffed.

"Look!" Gertrude pointed. "Tan sweater."

They followed the man. He pulled the howling boy past the Creation concession and zigzagged through the mob, Aloysius and Gertrude on his tail.

"Jimmy!" Gertrude shouted.

The boy turned.

Aloysius charged forward, dragged the kidnapper backwards by his collar, turned him around, and socked him in the kisser. Gertrude grabbed the boy. "Get the cops," she yelled. "He's the kidnapper."

People gathered around.

In seconds several blue-coats appeared.

"Get Mr. Collins," a copper shouted. "He's by the nickelodeon."

"Right," another cop bellowed.

An officer slapped handcuffs on the scoundrel and yanked him to his feet. "Thought you could kidnap the commissioner's boy?"

"I'm innocent," the ruffian moaned.

"Tell it to the judge," the copper said and hauled him off.

Coppers returned with—the diamond eater! Aloysius' jaw dropped. The other man he recognized from the newspapers. It was David Roland Francis, the exposition's president.

Blue-coats surrounded them.

"How do I thank you?" Mr. Collins cried, taking Jimmy in his arms.

Everyone introduced themselves.

Mr. Francis shook Aloysius's hand and tipped his hat at Gertrude.

"We have two heroes here."

A hush fell over the bystanders.

Mr. Francis continued, "These fine people rescued Jimmy from an evil man."

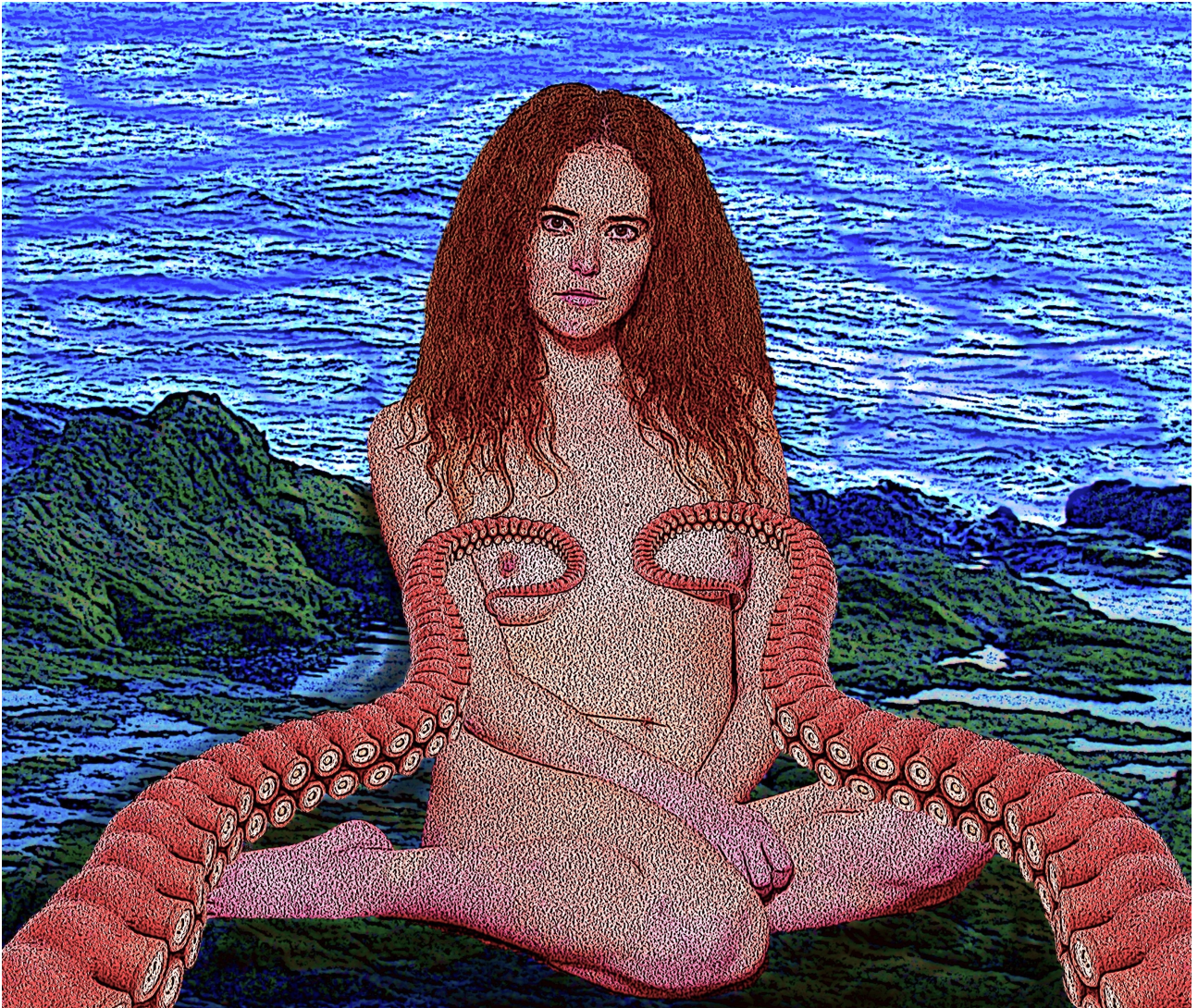
People clapped and whooped.

"Your noble act calls for an award of twenty-five dollars plus two free passes until the fair closes."

The crowd oohed, and yelled "Hip, hip, hooray."

Twenty-five smackers. It was the first honest money Aloysius had earned. His chest swelled with pride. It felt better than his biggest heist. He beamed at Gertrude, who took his hand.

"Now, everyone," Mr. Francis said with outstretched arms, "enjoy yourselves at the world's greatest fair!"



Startling as the First Touch of the Inconceivable by Bill Wolak

My First Apartment

by John Grey

The hills turned brilliant

yet the air smelled of sulfur
and hospital wards
and rotting meat

and the twilight sky
was plush as carpet

but then a truck
rumbled by
and my nerves
vibrated seismically -

inside the house
was safer than a sewer
but it didn't clean itself

a room for everything I needed
loving and reading
but also for toe-stubbing
and cutting myself shaving -

late sun shone
through backyard maples
grasses grew huge with the life
light momentarily gave them

then took away
left these unhinged bones
to wallow in shadow
in automobile exhaust -

it was a good place to be
if I couldn't be somewhere else

Spoor

by John Grey

Footprint on the trail.
What kind of creature
made this?
A hare? A fox?

One slight impression
can stiffen a thought
with bone, coat it in
thick fur.

So many clues
at ground level,
in the soil,
embolden the imagination.

In this place, nothing ever
completely moves on.
Not when I can get up close
to where they've been.

Look. A track.
A trek. A spoor.
It was filled enough
to still be here.

Straight to the Obituaries
by John Grey

You appreciate the fact
that the dead are in alphabetical order.
It makes it easier to find old friends.

The accompanying photos
could be a year old,
could be fifty,
typically from the last time
the deceased look good.

The causes are mostly
heart failure or cancer,
complications from the flu -
all of the things you fear.
But some die of traffic accidents,
gunfire, falls in the home,
the stuff that happens
to other people.

Many times, you see
someone you know
smiling back at you
from the other side,
and you feel both sorrow
and a little pride
that you've outlasted them,
despite your drinking
and your smoking.

The obituaries
are part of your morning ritual.
It's where ordinary lives
takes precedence over
what's happening in the world.

The newspaper arrives
and you immediately
thumb through to
the critical headlines.
The real page one
is somewhere in the middle.



An Unanticipated Arousal by Bill Wolak

The Movement

by Jeffrey Zable

The thing about the Beat writers is that besides reading a good deal of the main representatives on my own, I even took a class on them, and all I can say is that I liked—appreciated—very little of the writing as most of it was just reading words.

I don't know how these writers—predominately men!—did it 'cause I thought most of their writing was just typing, as Truman Capote said about the one Beat writer whose work I thought had the most substance, but still, I could feel—relate—to only a segment of it.

If I were asked to recommend which of the Beats to read, I'd probably suggest some of the writers on the periphery, as they did 100X more for me than the ones who represented the movement.

A Price to be Paid

by Jeffrey Zable

Penises have minds of their own, always seeking a warm place to go.

Mine had a mind of its own for as long as I can remember, and sometimes when it got to its destination it was pleasurable, while other times it wondered why it even made the effort.

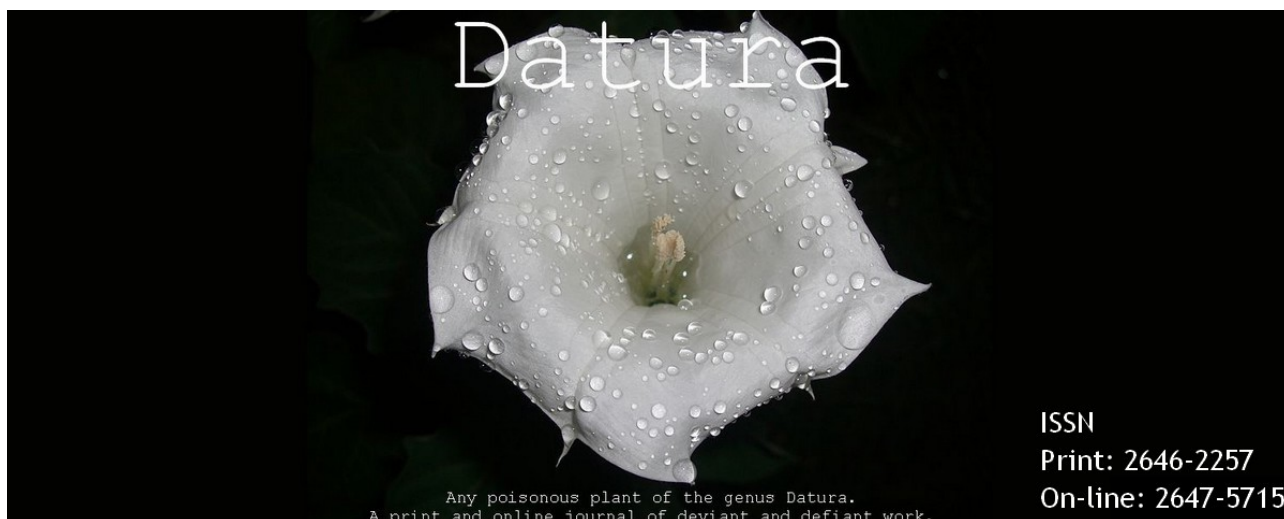
When I was a young man it especially seemed to act on impulse, as if was possessed of a wild, untamable nature.

During those times I tried to talk some sense into it, but to no avail.

And I must admit that either way there was always a price to be paid. . .



Irresistible as an Unanticipated Trance by Bill Wolak



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