

*guttural silk make new gong*



*j/j hastain*



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the wish was for

indelible  
smoothness

hands on body  
not as forage  
but more like

velour foliage

an allotment

a reliance

and beneath  
us  
motley bulbs

bold visions

viscerally upholding

enjoin  
without vortex

like porch swings swaying

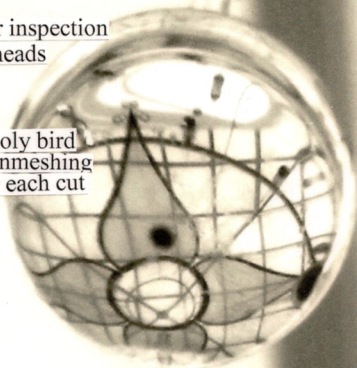
like roughage being turned into  
swans

a masonry  
not a militancy



oh effeminate gorgon  
grieving until  
appears the lover  
in the form of  
poised swans  
that upon closer inspection  
have had their heads  
sewn on

this obsession  
the decollated holy bird  
the sacrosanct enmeshing  
that bevels after each cut



ephemeral anatomies  
that are sustained  
by way of mythologies of additive  
rather than by way of mythologies of adam



you lay me back  
as gelled

lunar

mosaic

self-named haploid

then woman  
wooden

ovum

you fuck me with your tongue  
first

and before it being physical  
it is aesthetic

myriad

sensory  
amour

yet limbic

deviant

I always need new

wet aberrant

like the full moon  
being gently cultivated  
curved by way of

immanent  
bolds

being felt in the co-body

as venerate

as nest

I pant and pull you into

my pooling

you pump and pierce  
while sucking

this is loving  
by nude  
discus

by nudge

this is nursing  
the glottal light  
into literal  
somatic  
globules

to be offered a bundle of roses

a generativity  
to yearn through

how you place them between us

then apply your weight

my heart there

an argot  
gurgling



moment that is so original  
we anagram

kismet round

reach-bound

we apply

a penis shaped

co-womb

a musculature that softens

with so many lyrical indulgences

a spans

that stretches from chrysanthemum to cyclamen

always both

prostrate

and deified

pulling off the petals  
until  
a syrupy rouge

you place them on my chakras  
as shocks

oh jolt thesaurus

this type of stroke

that is a skill

that is  
all plasma-gryphon

like hail falling through an open  
window

we  
a syntax of closeness

a lit pelt

a symptom  
of distance-less

and sonar hunch  
becoming a new form of bracken

as orgasm nears

alterities become estuaries

become allegiances

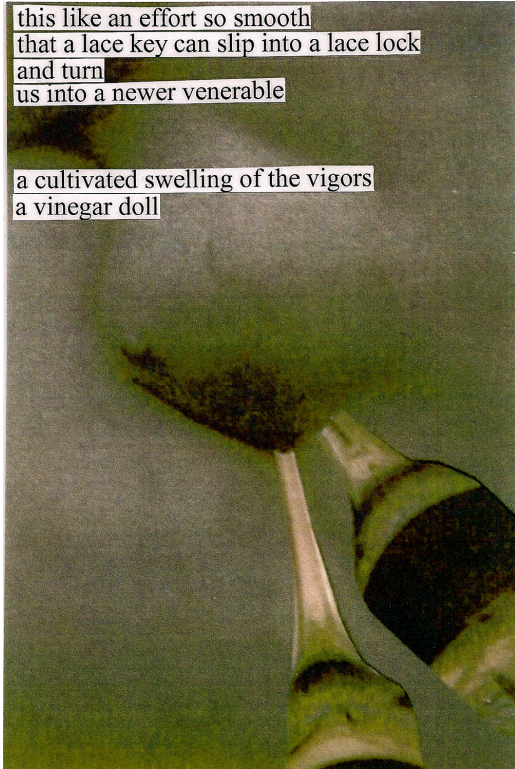
as we gaze  
into the difficult  
accumulating  
pattern

that we added wings  
only after so many sequences of husking



this like an effort so smooth  
that a lace key can slip into a lace lock  
and turn  
us into a newer venerable

a cultivated swelling of the vigors  
a vinegar doll





finding a way to get milk  
from dice

suddenly  
a sodden way  
to not  
die



## Publisher's Afterword

“Do not seek to follow in the footsteps of men of old;  
seek what they sought.”

—Matsuo Basho

I firmly believe that the poetry of j/j hastain is best approached without context, simply as words and visual arrangements. But context is tragically popular at the moment, so I'll give you the context I started out with: an incorrect one.

The first time I read a manuscript by j/j hastain, I was reading quickly, acting in a technical, rather than editorial capacity, and saw that it was dedicated to j/j's wife. The content of the manuscript did not immediately correct my assumption that j/j was a heterosexual male.

I later explored jjhastain.com, and learned that j/j self-identifies as “Trans, (which is different from transgender, though not at all discounting it),” and preferred to be described with gender-neutral pronouns. But it wasn't until I heard their voice on their answering machine that my assumption about their body parts was corrected—something that you, having read this book, can perhaps find both amusing and irrelevant.

To be clear: j/j hastain's poetry is not about gender identifications and definitions. Rather, these poems are *explorations* of the body, gender-based, sexual, and otherwise: offering a nuanced, subtle, and ultimately quite beautiful picture of a gender that does not see itself in concrete terms. No one could pick up the works of j/j hastain and say, "That's me! I'm the same gender identity that j/j is!" Rather, one picks up their work and sees, not a map, but a methodology for one's own exploration.

*guttural* is the shortest manuscript ever published by Unlikely Books, aching in its density, exploring whole modes of being with a few keystrokes. It is not a comprehensive examination of j/j's physical journey. *prurient anarchic omnibus* (Spuyten Duyvil, 2011) examines j/j's journey in a more summation-oriented way, and can be studied in the manner of a treatise. *guttural silk make new gong* is more like a monument: an identification of a (not necessarily temporal) moment in which j/j's explorations are given new direction, depth, and wisdom. Although it includes several discrete poems and works of visual art, I find it is better viewed as a single work than a collection of pieces. (j/j's own terminology encourages this approach: they refer to their altered photographs as "cells.")

Reading *guttural silk make new gong*, I am reminded of no work so much as Leonard Cohen's *New Skin for the Old Ceremony*.

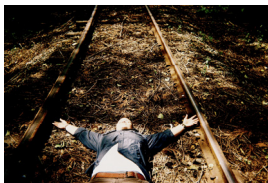
The comparison might initially seem preposterous—after all, if Cohen is in any way queer, he’s managed to keep it a secret from me, despite my dozens of inquiries. But the entire purpose of j/j’s body of work is to reveal that gender exploration is/can be as diverse as life itself. There’s no reason to expect that two individuals would have superficially similar journeys, and if some opine that *New Skin for the Old Ceremony* now seems limited by its generational perspective, we can only hope that *guttural silk make new gong* will someday seem limited by the fact that j/j was born into a world in which they had to fight for the right of genderqueer/Trans exploration. In both explorations there is the patterning of symbols: the latticework of religion, spirituality, self-analysis and desire. And if *New Skin* seems bitter next to *guttural*’s infectious ecstaticism, let us remember that all sincere explorations can be complimentary, that both works are valuable (and I believe that both will be enduring) precisely because of their acceptance, indeed embracing, of their myriad aspects and counterparts. Not for nothing does *prurient anarchic omnibus* repeat the phrase, “dear weaver of disparates.”

And if my desire to compare j/j to Cohen originates in the fact that j/j sings on their answering machine, I, as your all-knowing writer of introductions, will keep that to myself.

—Jonathan Penton

*Selected Other Works by j/j bastain*

- compile*, 2007  
*let me letters*, 2008  
*asymptotic lover // thermodynamic vents*, 2009  
*how nerve-yen became the new yew tree*, 2009  
*our wombs*, 2009  
*post cards* (with Marthe Reed), 2010  
*the felts*, 2010  
*cock-burn*, 2010  
*newest bountiful verb*, 2010  
*we in my Trans*, 2010  
*verges and vivisections*, 2011  
*new forms and meditations for the pressurized libertine monk*, 2011  
*our bodies are beauty inducers*, 2011  
*autobiography of my gender*, 2011  
*prurient anarchic omnibus*, 2011  
*long past the presence of common*, 2011  
*a womb-shaped wormhole*, 2011  
*queer phylactery*, 2011  
*extant shamanisms*, 2011  
*riding the lace barometer through uncanny subsumed*, 2012  
*we cum ∴ come in the yearn fields amongst statues with interior arms*, 2012  
*approximating diapason*, 2012  
*vigorous* (forthcoming 2012)  
*the yet to be pronounced pronouns* (forthcoming 2012)  
*female versions of Christ* (an artist book, forthcoming 2012)  
*vigorous* (forthcoming 2012)



j/j hastain lives in Colorado, USA with their beloved. j/j's writing has appeared in numerous journals including *Trickhouse*, *Vlak*, *Big Bridge*, *The Offending Adam*, *Dear Sir*, *Eccolinguistics*, *Housfire*, *EOAGH*, *Aufgabe*, *Queerocracy Art*, *Masculine Femininities*, *Caketrain*, *Plath Profiles*, and *Bombay Gin*. j/j is currently in the process of curating an *Anthology of Queer Nudes* (Knives Spoons and Forks Press, 2013) and has helped curate (and participated in) two major Trans anthologies. j/j is an Elective Affinities participant, a member of Dusie kollektiv, writes for Lit Pub and is a regular contributor to *Sous Les Pavés*. j/j currently writes creative reviews for *Big Other*, *Jacket2*, *Horse Less Press*, *PANK* and *Empire Review*. j/j's work appeared in a Queer-focused show at the Leslie-Lohman Annex in New York. j/j's books have been finalists in the Kelsey Street, Grey Book Press, Grace Notes Books, Switchback, Omnidawn, DIAGRAM and *Absakta* book and essay competitions. j/j's manuscript *extant shamanisms* won the Pavement Saw poetry award. j/j's manuscript *dear secondary umbilical*, won second place in the Mad Hatter's Wild and Wyrld Poetry Contest. In 2011 j/j's book *we in my Trans* was nominated for the Stonewall Book Award and j/j's book *prurient anarchic omnibus* was nominated for a Lambda Literary Award.

