



Distorted Reflections

A Collection of Juvenilia

Jeffrey Side

With artwork by Daniela Voicu

Argotist Ebooks

Cover image by Rachel Lisi

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Distorted Reflections

Goldenrod

I watched you gather goldenrod in the fields.
I watched you swimming in the forest.
And I watched you keeping your hands
upon your knees.

You breathe like a scientist. And your breath
becomes the count of dreams. You smell
as sweet as the second-hand books you
throw away.

And the caverns in the earth are not singing.
And I cannot walk around the laboratory.
And I cannot rest my fingers.
And I cannot stay in when the sun is out.

I used to think you were a gift to the
experimenters. I used to think you were a gift
to the men fighting for their home.

Or the men who cry on the heaths and moors.
Or the men who fall in the underground.
Or the men who wait for us when the clock stops.

I watched you gather goldenrod in the fields.
The sun was escaping from your hair
and your feet were deep in the wet grass.

And your arms were filled with goldenrod.

She Left Without Delay

I mark the time when I fly high.
I'll be landing very soon.
I cannot relocate my genes.
I cannot fix the balloon.

When suspicion is in your heart
the innocent are hurt too.
My ambitions are paved with
thoughts of a nature aimed at you.

I'll take you off that man one day.
I'll take you at your word.
I'll take you very far away
to somewhere you preferred.

I need you in this room dead soon.
I need you in the air.
I need you on the moon in June.
I need you everywhere.

I knew someone who looked like you.
She haunts me to this day.
She was a screamer too.
She left without delay.

Juliet

Wearing the Earth
like a robe,
I flew across the world
today.

I could see
the buried memories
hidden
in the trees,

and I could find
no one
to hurt
the two of us outside of
you and me.

I knew you when
you were nothing.

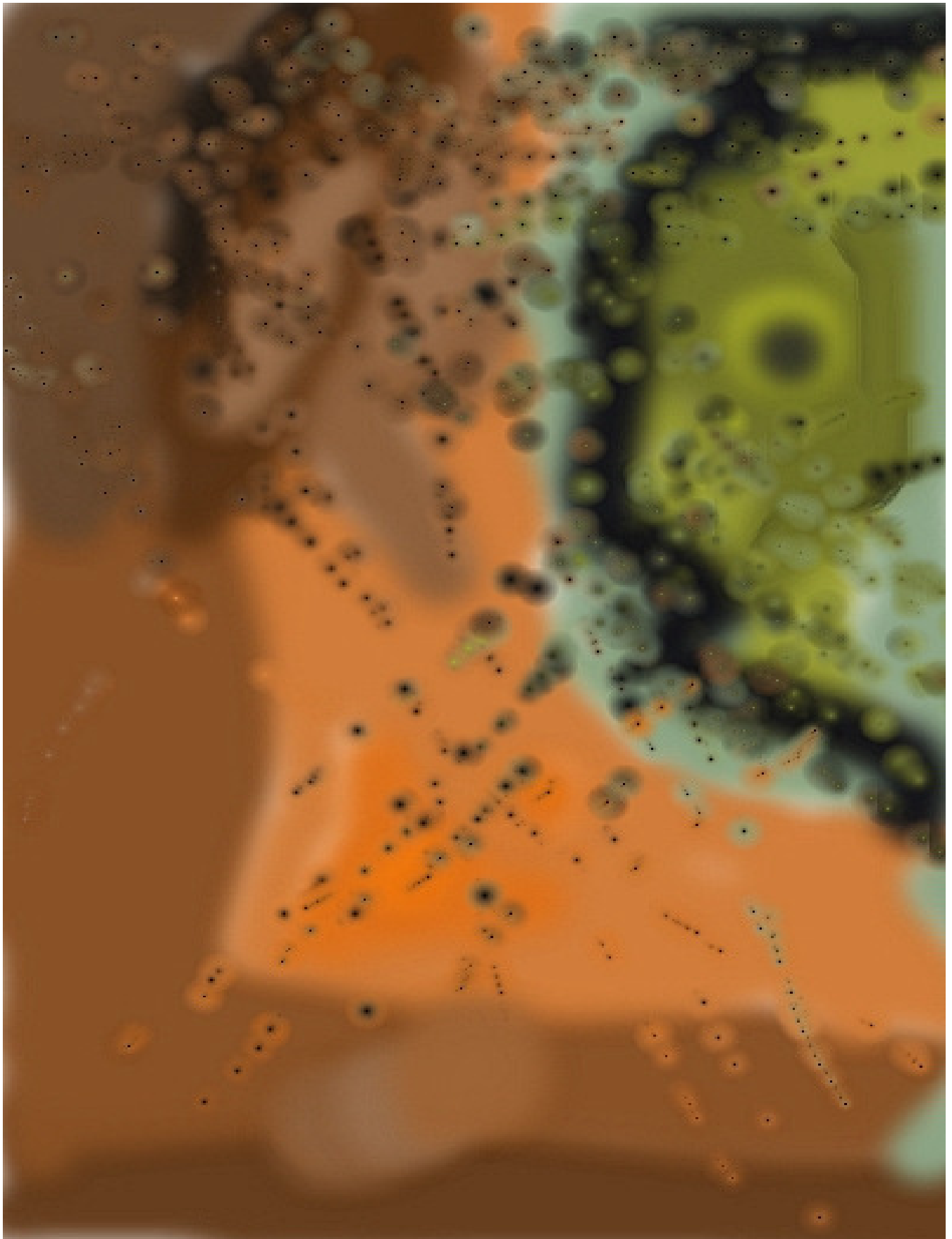
And then
I knew you when you were
something.

And then I met you
as you were
passed
from friend to friend.

Each one leaving you
alone
to weep in the
desert.

You had that look
in your eyes
that said tonight was
the day.

And I wish you had known me
when the sun was bright.



Greenheys Road

The vessels of love crowd in.
Their traumas hidden
among the reeds.

No love is lost or given to them
as they clutter the minds
of thieves.

Strong, sober and drunk
I come to you.
My weakness revealed
in my glee.

And book-like I pray on
your need
to comfort – sometimes.

Now there is light.
And now there is dark.

And that is the way that you
can pay
the charity you give
to men like me.

B Block

You keep your
services for them.
You keep
the church they know.

And they make
donations regularly
with
one hand on your head.

They lean you
down towards
the cup.
You sip the overflow.

You lick your lips
and move your fingers
far apart.

You have no town
inside you
now.
You have no
travellers there.

Did you send them
home again?
Or did they leave for
better fare?

I was the one who
landed upon
your
lessened wing.

You had me
and then you had
your king.

I came to you a
broken ring. I danced
inside

your mouth.
I gave you all my

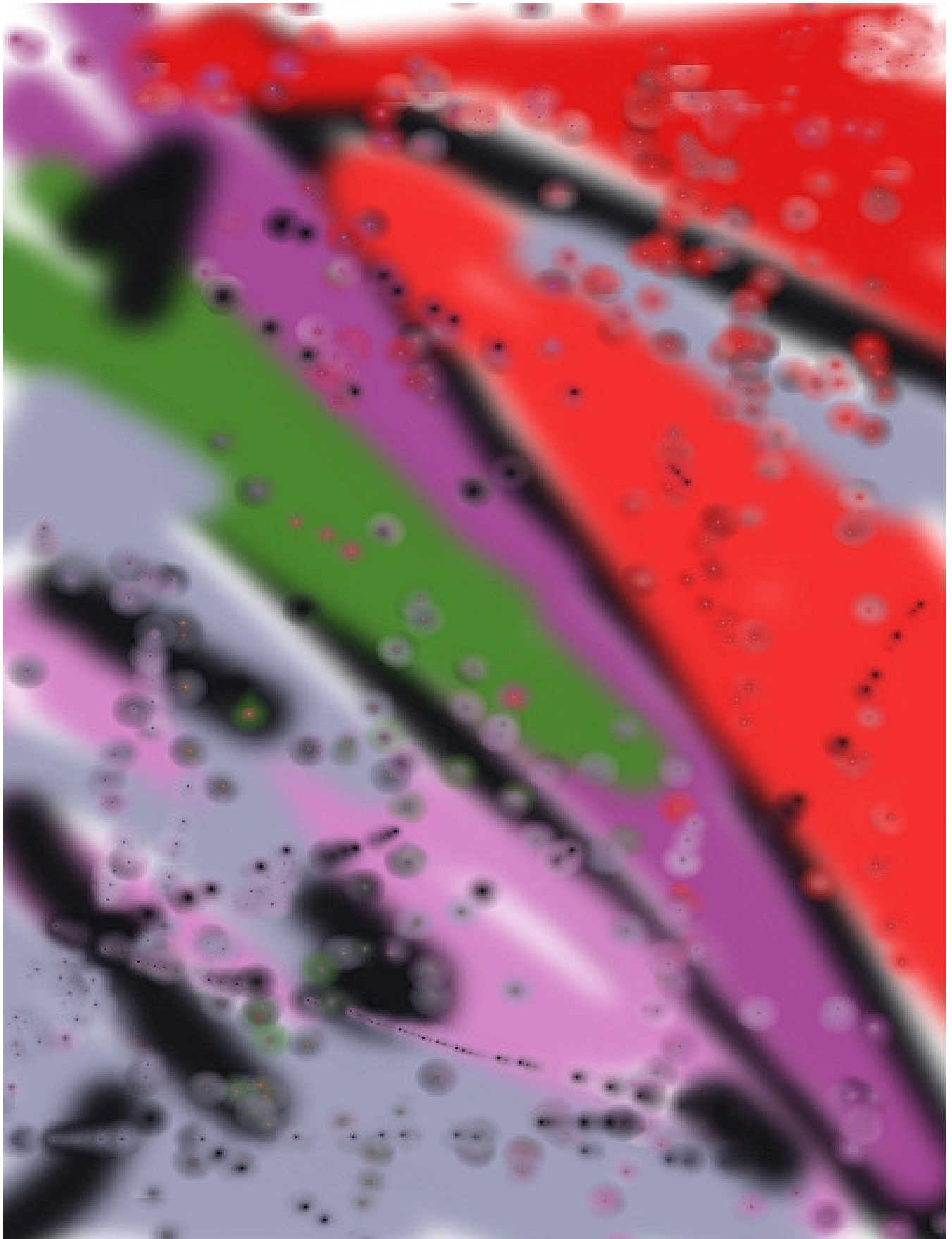
money
before you let me
in.

I couldn't be a

saviour now. I couldn't
be a queen.
I keep looking around
for things
I haven't seen.

I seldom wandered in
your night.
I seldom took
the fall.

Now deep inside
I know
there's no
one else to call.



Voices in the Light

Sometimes voices
in the light
will call me back to
them.

Back out of this
place where
I have spoken
from.

And then I will turn
my
back on you,
and on
the storm-bled sea.

And even
on the sleeping faces
that will
never
wake for me.

I will find myself
expanded
out of limitations
plight.

And no
earthly cause
or battle
will keep
me in this fight.

And what will
seem like
nothingness to
those
that have remained,

to me will seem like
childhood
when in

the time of May.

She Was as Tall as the Eiffel

On the journey back,
riding on a lonely track
beat-up.

My memories of you
are packed deep inside
a sack.

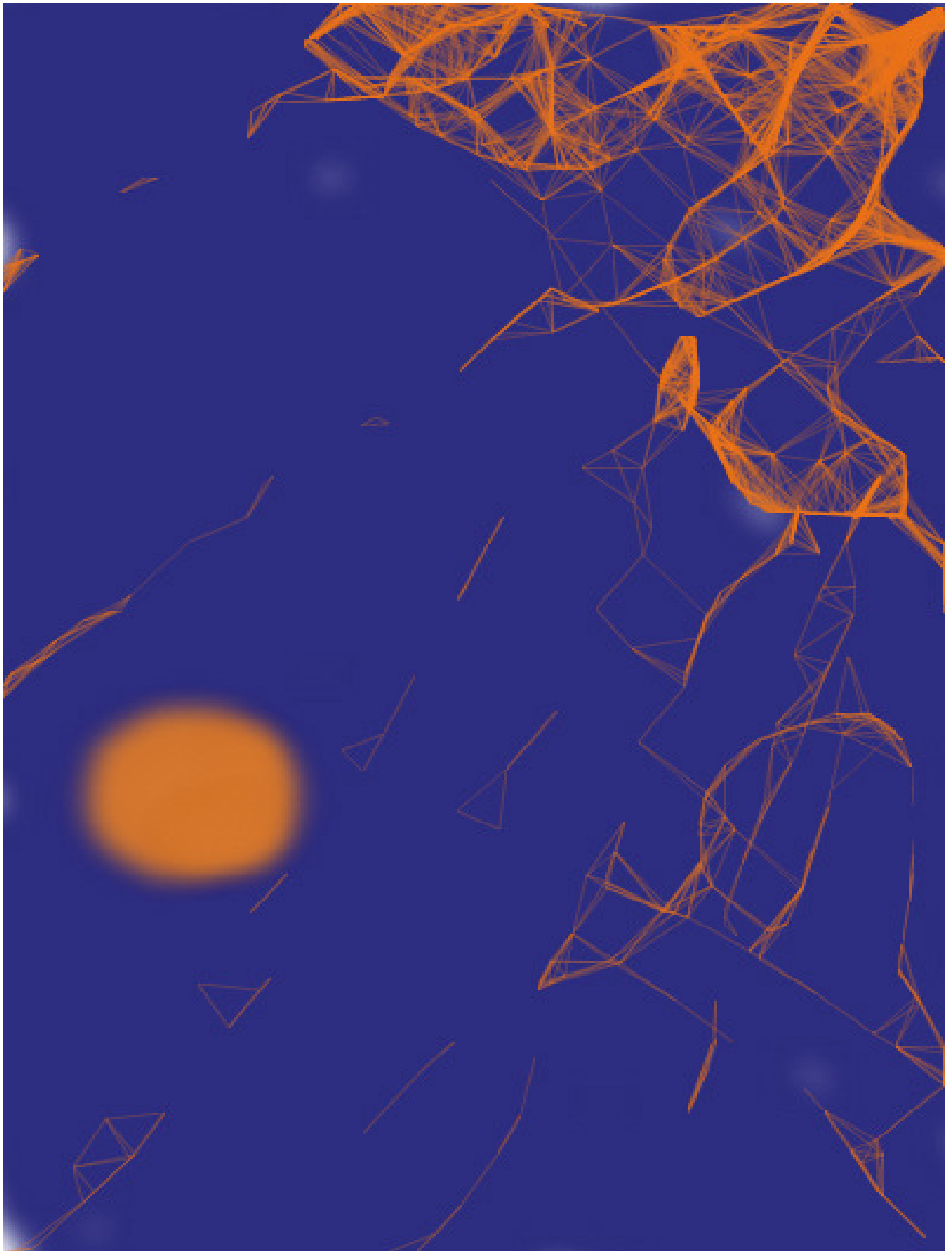
I never knew your mouth
or your soil. I never
knew your fingering.

Begging
lonely men you begged
me, and I gave you
something then.

I can't remember
which or what
or when.
Or if it was
something I once sent.

But is it time?
You left them
abruptly.

And is it true about
the merchant?



Can't Talk Anymore in the Old Way

On the days I'd go to visit.
I knew
she would be free.

In the mornings she'd do
the Sun Salute,
and in
the evenings
make peppermint tea.

I first caught sight of
her in the designer sea,
when she was captive in her
swim suit
and the water beckoned me.

On crowded nights she'd
calm me down
with all I expected and without
any sound.

And on days
like this, when the coast is clear,
I'd travel
up to see her there.
Then back at
dawn to my place, here,
by morning I would repair.

On days like this I'd visit her,
when her lover was
elsewhere.

And into the darkness I would slip,
until she ceased
to care.

When You Were Tempered with Delight

When you were tempered
with delight
your virtues were taken
down and forests
that you passed through
were not finite.

When you were
tempered with delight
you kept the
saddest oceans,
you kept
the proudest streams.
And wild pens
would
not strain your sight.

When you were tempered
with delight
you carried sand
upon your necklace and
cream upon your
lips. And you
never made the journey
through the park.

When you were
tempered with delight
you were
consumed by bikers in the
light and
nurses in the dark.
And taut strings
pulled
on you forever.

When you were tempered
by delight
strong bars were
held around your
fortress
and strong men

could never kiss the
wound you
would always hide.

The Seeds Within Me

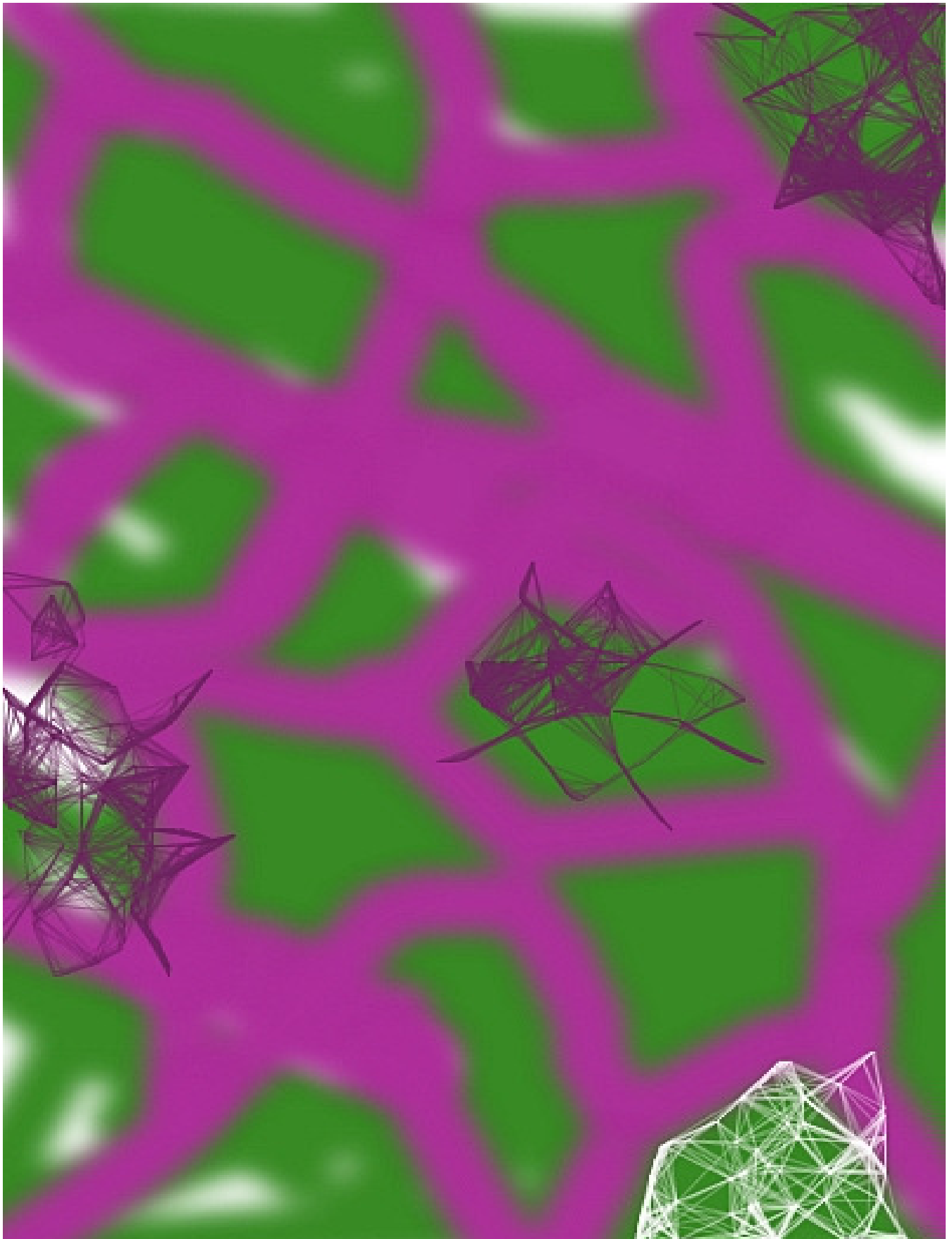
The seeds within me
formed my shape

and sorrows
long before I knew them.

Like some inevitable
punishment I'm
blind to
they cause predictions
to be true
and disasters to be
just right.

They stopped me
climbing in the fields
and falling on the
slopes that
framed the lake.

They made me like a
fallen tree whose
rings can be counted
and whose memory
can be read.



Books That Soothe the Dying

The humming sounds
like the
primrose singing.

New across your gaze
whole pillars torment you
between journeys.

Everywhere longings
that occurred gradually
finally overflow you.

And intently felt irony
is like bread
to the sentence of
imagination.

Also, sitting appears
doubtful
even while the wakeful
man
goes straight in
the parlour.

Sketches of the Small Town

Over provided to the
small point. Stop or water.

The highest touches are by the
snowdrifts.

But towards the waters
all sides are to the sea.

Moist flight south,
and valleys, more
finally,
become lovelier.

World looking,
listening.

Gone, distant happiness.

When the Air Was Still

We were together and she fell.
Her name I could never spell.

When morning came the trees then shaded
a sunlit spot in forest gladed.

I came upon a table polished.
God is love but who is nourished?

A single anchor hanging down.
A ritual without a sound.

The rivers of youth and death
are now awake where they once crept.

I tamed a serpent in my hand
and buried a woman in the sand.

Prester John has come again,
although he never left us then.

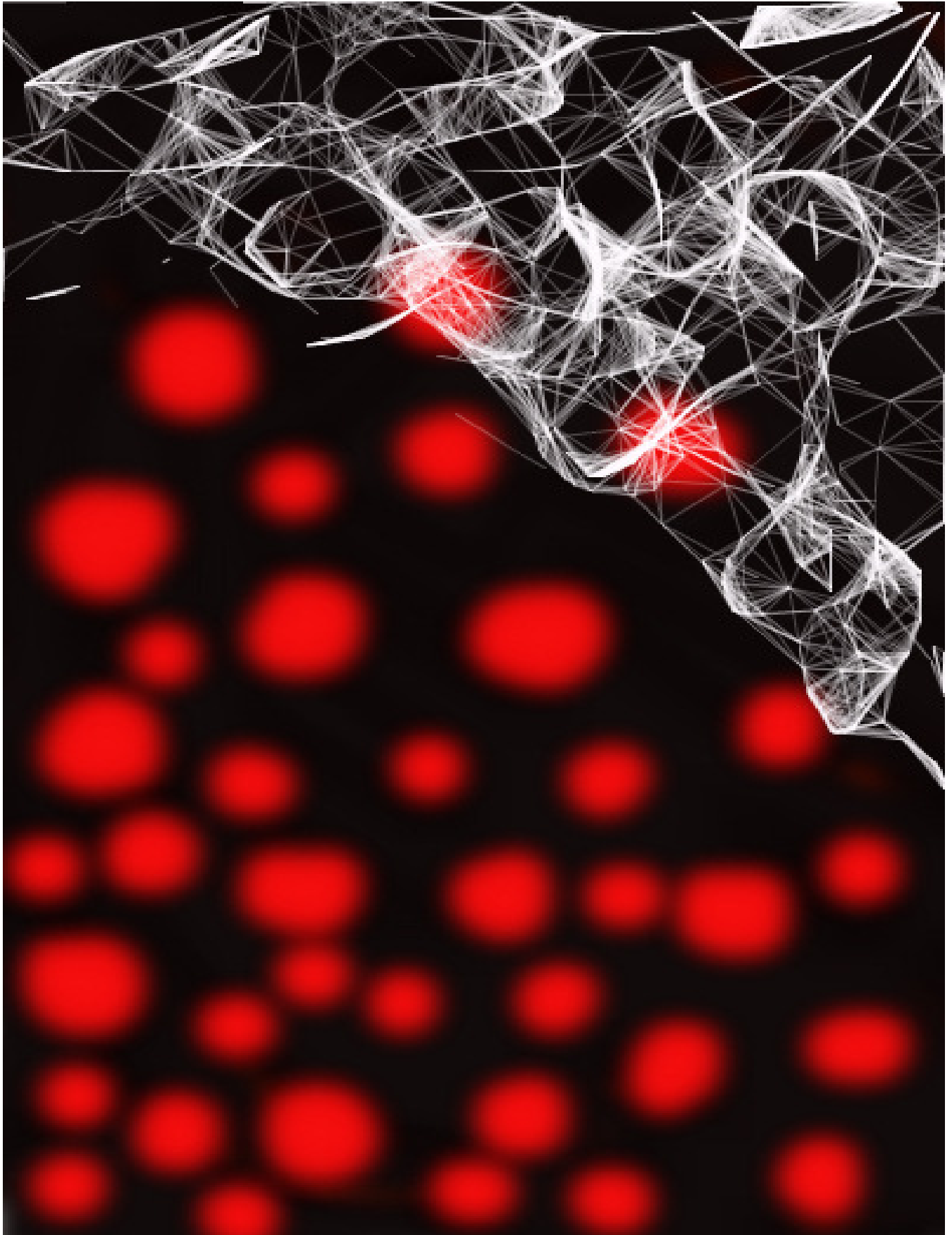
Animals now cough at night.
And clarity seems recondite.

The clouds made shadows on her chest
as she prepared for final rest.

I was born to forget my death.
I was born to count my breath.

A paper bag lived in the breeze
while my love died of a new disease.

I mourned her when the air was still,
and lay on her grave in the morning chill.



What Do the French Quote?

She loved to sit and listen
to me sing as she held me
against her rings while
the worm destroyed her.

The caves to the east can
be followed by the sun.

And she travelled there
among the strangers
from the sea.

Like the bubble-islands in
my bath she never stayed the
same. And when she
woke she saw no one.

She kept me warm with company.
And we would
whisper for hours about the
books she'd bought.

Then I would watch her
automatic hand land and turn
the pages of some thin volume
asking what the
French would quote.

She asked about the river,
and whether 'twas true
that glass never smashed there.

I said it was so when I left.

Foolishness on a Windy Night

I would find a room and sit
looking at the back of my eyelids
for many hours.

But no blindness could be found there.
No corners could be turned.
And no chairs heard.

We went fleeing in the forest
between the trees that were dead
and the counted skeletons
that had turned red.

There was no one about to tell
us to go so we stayed
and smelt the smoke of wood-fire shade
and pre-Raphaelite heat.

The shade then began to get light
and I acted like a foolish man.

We married on a windy night when the
cathedral sign was still on.

On Hot Summer Nights

I declared my love to her
and she turned herself away.
But I will surely offer it
again to her someday.

She lived on her own
near to where I was born.
And though I never told her
to her I was sworn.

On hot summer nights
when trapped in my flat
I'd wander out to see her
wherever it was that she sat.

But she was with another
who went there for to hide.
And many distances he had travelled
to lay his baggage at her side.

If I Hide the Stars at Night

O Joy, you're really not this mad.
You've tasted everything I've ever had.
I would wander in your night
if you'd give me back my right
to make you see that you just play games
with yourself while you wait to claim the dust.
And you speak as though
you've got every detail sussed.
And reading all the books you sent to me,
I could never be this free.
If I'm gone were would your mind be?

O Joy, you know that you are wrong.
I don't have to be the one that's gone.
If I hide the stars at night
will you give up on your fight?
And we'll pretend that we share this roof,
these walls, this table and that chair.
I could be someone else for you
if you really must compare.
And I'd see the old cathedral fly.
And the mountains passing by.
And your nose turned up towards the sky.

Livingston Drive

Oh my dearest darling
I have done you no wrong.
Like that time in the morning
I fell in love with you.
Your father was a good man.
He loved me like a son.
And now you are absent evermore.

What have you done to me
with your words that are now gone?
I loved you like a saviour
in this world you can't forsake.
My lover of the starry eyes,
I loved you long ago.
And now you are absent evermore.

I only came upon your arms
when I called that afternoon.
And I saw a woman in the forest
who was calling out to you.
Her picture was like the one
you showed me hidden in your room.
And now you are absent evermore.

Jeffrey Side

Jeffrey Side has had poetry published widely in both print and online; and has reviewed poetry for *Jacket*, *Eyewear*, *The Colorado Review*, *New Hope International*, *Stride*, *Acumen* and *Shearsman*.

From 1996 to 2000 he was the deputy editor of *The Argotist* magazine, and is currently the editor of the online successor of this, The Argotist Online, which has an ebook publishing arm called Argotist Ebooks.

His book publications include, *Carrier of the Seed*, *Slimvol*, *Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes* (with Jake Berry) and *Outside Voices: An Email Correspondence* (with Jake Berry).

Daniela Voicu

Daniela Voicu is a Romanian poet, novelist and painter. Her poems have been published in *Cuget Liber*, *Agero Stuttgart*, *New York Magazine*, *Maintenant 7*, *Poetic Diversity*, *Pirene's Fountain*, *Curentul International*, *Revista Luceafarul*, *Pagini Romanesti* in *Noua Zeelanda* and *Pheonix Mission*. In various anthologies, including *Tears of Ink*, *The Poetry of War and Peace*, *Words on the Winds of Change*, *Just a Dream* and *Reflections on a Blue Planet*. And her poetry collections include, *Poems of Angels* (2006), *Blue in Vitro* (2012), *Surfing Silence* (2012), *Windows without Dreams* (ebook 2012) and *Sky Hands* (2012).

In 2009, she founded the international journal of culture and literature, *Cuib Nest Nido*; and in 2011 she founded the international poetry festival of music and contemporary art, *The Art to Be Human*.