

*Ar*

Craig Dworkin

*Asked Arragon, the  
historian, about history.  
He said you have to invent it.  
—John Cage, Mushroom Book*

## I. Articles of Faith (Indefinite).

- In 1894, Lord Rayleigh and William Ramsay conceived of a new constituent of the atmosphere.
- This substance was not isolated as an element until 1897, when Louis Aragon was born.
- *As appeared by the manner in which paper, impregnated with a solution of it, burnt.*
- There is no record to suggest that the confinement of M<sup>me</sup> Aragon lasted twenty-seven months, but it is in that discrepancy between the terms that surrealism gestates.
- Rayleigh and Ramsay “thought it undesirable to shrink from any labor that would tend to complete the verification.”
- Despite the lack of proof, The Smithsonian Institution paid them \$10,000 for their annunciation, although their proposal of the symbol *A* for the new element was rejected and denied.

II. Te deum.

an oar goes

*swift, bright, and glancing*

over the water

pulling after  
and about

a purse  
sent

adrift

a gape

an oar quarters the rim like a reft-  
lathe when the wave pours open

lap, slap, addles  
over a paper nautilus lost

or almost rased  
and paupered

*litros* listing westward off the coast

a lee along the vessel's sides  
leaves a crust between the staves

“Suffice it to say that an attempt was made to cause  
a store of atmospheric nitrogen to circulate by means  
of a fan, driven by a water-motor.”

a scraping marks the beat of measures struck  
and wavered by the need—

*1674: Are a Goan  
or Gawn, Chesh*

*gloss gall on leash*

or by contraction of the word

to good the hour come, or

gone

*bright*

imblued

with oxide

blistering their gills  
fish spill soluble in the sun

*swift, bright, and*

“The light emitted from it is of a crimson color,  
with a blue or lilac shade.”

splitting,

like the hides of oxen, parched

water skins, rugal

singular, sincere

yet divisions do occur

in labored

graspings *swift*

branchiæ flaring out

and then

a coming together, as if to say: *it is relevant; it is like this; you have done this*

*and glancing*

silent (cup unclattered but beautiful)

light pouring

save for the bubbles borne by gas in a liquid

nature abhors

*tu non horruisti virginis uterum*

an angel with a stylus lounges in the round  
to capture a record of criminal speech —

or impotence, or critique                      language used to conceal its true import

[by contraction]

*t'*                      *'d*                      *'m*

the words refusing to work

“for they are of a most astonishingly indifferent body”

gilt lidded or lashed, moneyed eyes idle

*swift, bright, and glancing*

Boredom is always counterrevolutionary.

### III. The Virgin Nyctalope.

Argus, insomniac, dreams devoutly of sleep: in a chapel crypt in Siena, down narrow arcose stairs, there is a fresco of the Virgin that weeps black tears. *Because she has scratched her eyes in sleep.* The thick liquid espesses with a viscous difficulty from her angular, Byzantine eyes. Bitter, they harden and fall in cysts distilled from the white plaster of the wall, which has swollen with the centuries and cracked in seams like a poppy bulb.

#### IV. Arcadia

The incandescents that  
replaced the gas lamps  
in the Passage de L'Opéra  
display their threads in miniature shop windows.

The filaments bear delicate  
domed anthers.

The papers yellow with  
the pollen and floresce.

*“The soap-lees being then poured out of the tube, and separated from the quicksilver, seemed to be perfectly neutralized, and they did not at all discolor paper tinged with the juice of blue flowers.”*

Rot ironic scrollwork wrote.

A slow charybdis circles, spiraling the shell lake.

Cowries: scratch

of sand that lines the shallows of the sound.

Currency, accumulated to an image,

charges.

And so now,

once invisible

allergens fluoresce:

excited

and tremulous

with the current.

Exited and sent

out in the flow,

the predicates silt.

They speculate upon the deposits left by an action.

*relig*

*devot*

*compass*

*fus*

The particles wink  
in the late long night of the capital.

The dust breeds on the vinyl and the plush.

Gins that spin to stoke the lapping of their liquid song,  
these cylinders are cades  
“to breed up in softness”

a collection of motes

along  
a rift,  
a gap  
of styled surf  
that tricks a trawling needle  
into drifts of buffet  
and becalm.

As static  
off the surfeit hiss and skip  
of oily, wracked shellac

punctuates the passage  
in a syncopated cycle of profane illuminations

from the tubes  
of vacuums cracking

— now off, now on —

the stroller finds a pantomime  
of shallow ridge and shadow

which first appear,  
and then

from a measured volume  
to indefinite expansion:

one March morning, in 1969,  
on a sandy beach in Santa Monica,  
one liter of Argon was returned to the atmosphere.