

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^{me} 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.