

DO THE MONKEY  
Norma Cole

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e - e d i t i o n s

Do the Monkey

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LRL e-editions

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**DO THE MONKEY**



To Rob, Michelle & Jesse



*Before the mind catches up  
the body's been and gone.*

no my hedge

---

it's not that I've reversed my vest

---

like all habits

---

I insist on it

---

to my knowledge

---

a butcher's work

---

keystone or plumstone

---

something I've learned to see

---

*for Emmanuel Hocquard*

The Olympics is All in Your Mind

*for Elliot Anderson*

bluish-white, scarce ore, shaking and red splotches as if her leg was all bloody and  
then blood would drip on the rug and on the chair  
calming, like a color, like blue, or calming like the pink of a child's room or a hospital  
corridor, pink pearl or a kind of peach color intending to be calming like the absence  
of discourse  
you simply keep going as the shadows get long, twos and then threes and sixes until  
finally two enter(s) and one last one  
but then some tentative foot placements, as if the floor was suddenly hot or covered  
with a fine layer of ground glass, fine as a powder  
imagine the dancers to be in the room, in the room with the blue chair and blue air,  
sheet music strewn about

\* \* \*



They left a long time ago.

Strides into the room.

Strides in this restricted space?

Stepped then, gingerly more likely. Entered gently, tentatively, stepping between the coffee table strewn with papers, possibly pages of street music, I mean sheet music, drafts or sketches of an unfinished piece, as yet untitled, sporadically thought and partially remembered.

Steps between the upholstered blue chair and the coffee table strewn with papers, then past the blue chair filled with blue air, appearing to aim for the sofa on the opposite side of the room, outside the frame. Debates about suing a rhetorical device, perhaps repetition or receptor theory, with variations, here, but lets the idea slip away out of the frame, over the falls in a barrel.

People were still pulling that prank over fifty years ago, before the beginning of her reign. The idea of her reign over a barrel over the falls.

\* \* \*

The one not in the room at that time had been trying to organize an event, a spectacle patterned after his idea of the olympics as they once were. Nothing like the corporate sports events of today but rather more like an imagination of the *arche*, sports, arts, *arete*, competition and excellence, risk. This time they would be in a town he'd visited in Mexico. Or in Paris, in and around an abandoned automobile factory. With corporate sponsorship, or at least seed money. Tennis and Theater. What he enjoyed. What he enjoyed watching on the television, also outside the frame, in that room, from the couch or the upholstered blue chair, during the afternoon with the curtains drawn against the light like the light now, leaching out the color, the substance, the very forms from the room. Drafts of the proposal were piled uncollated on the coffee table near the blue inflatable chair. How to approach potential subscribers, he wondered.

\* \* \*

Did she know that painting whose title was the same as her book? There is no evidence of painting or even books about painting in that room, only mirrors and, at times, smoke.

They hadn't been all the way through the argument about meaning.

There might be examples, if individuals could be said to be examples, not of their gibberish, for that gibberish is something else, something they own and use to fill the room's vacancy with vacancy. But their lives are maps, they're rather the evidence of the rupture, both collusion and opportunism, homeostatic like the blue air, like the atmosphere in the room, the way it refers—it's a stretch—to the dream of B's double room, preposterously, providing documentation, occasional, posthumous but enduring, that is the hook.

When need or pleasure being mutually addressed, erase the surface indicators of favor, the power index

\* \* \*

Nothing yet said about the place mat or the dark part of the chair back facing the desk, facing the wrinkled picture plane.

A young man placed his hands on my head, along the sides of my head and said come back in six days. I said I couldn't, or thought I couldn't. He thought, come back when you can. He gave me a turquoise umbrella when I left the room. It matched the chair. It might have been behind the chair.

The black suitcase is stored behind that chair. It looks identical to the one with writing all over it, Tibetan writing in white, like shoe polish, the liquid white shoe polish that comes in a plastic bottle with a sponge at the opening, under the cap, so you can brush the polish onto your white canvas shoes or white leather shoes once you've lifted them from under the other chair.

\* \* \*

## HEAVY LIFTING

She doesn't want  
the bunched look  
of male lifters  
*Diane Ackerman*

### 1.

She doesn't want  
The small arena almost filled  
When the fighters slow down, moving towards each other  
My head so big

I need to train  
I said to Joe Frazier  
*Here I am*  
I remember Sundays when the man I call my father made me

We play basketball  
We play basketball  
The dark scissors of his legs  
Sometimes I feel like I will *never* stop

Please refrain from ogling your neighbor's penis  
Stretch your hamstrings, think of how you are lifting  
I'll be the first  
If muscles are the currency of dreams

I go out to find whatever comes  
I never told you  
I caught a tremendous fish  
Like a big peony

2.

It was too soon  
I wanted to look  
Against the colored horizon  
I was happy enough

I forgot  
Sand shifted in the undercurrent  
Into the purples and oranges of reflection  
As the sky went black, slowly

You never thought it would come to this  
A man staring at a small lake sees  
Didn't think of the clasp  
God help me, liberal mothers

What's it like? You take it from me  
Happy to have these fish!

3.

Caesar's Palace  
Half asleep  
It comes over and over  
In 1948, the year I was born

I sat up straight in bed  
I never played for you.  
I have not slept for a week  
Because he played games seriously

One woman has nothing out of place

4.

Sprawled belly-down on the damp planks  
The approach to the bar is everything  
I am the poet of the pinch shot the same as the fly-kill  
I know I am robust

Half-numb, guzzling bourbon and Coke from coffee mugs  
But why make a long story long?



5.

The heavy bodies lunge, the broken language watching baseball when the San Francisco Giants take the field we were drinking for free, bumming beers his art is eccentricity his aim in this soft age in my soft two bronzes into the change of autumn brush the elements have merged into solicitude half of America doubtless has the whole but supper's a small enough price to pay

Her face livened up but she was smart noses in the grave polloi that roiled baseball in the winter is our dream photos and clippings fade sugar dazzled too a sniff in the fallen air they come back now those nights my friend and I I like the articulate crack the little gussied-up bodies and terrible for anyone in his groove

6.

When we both walked out empty-handed  
Mantle ran so hard, they said  
The stadium is filled  
I prayed for him to quit, before  
We light the candles we were told to bring  
He could help us out  
Going up for the jump shot  
A hook shot kisses the rim and  
When the world finally ends  
You can always spot them even from high up

7.

Am I really a sports fan I ask myself?  
Is nothing real but when I was fifteen  
A huge summer afternoon with no sign of rain.... Elm trees  
Though the day is just breaking  
We step out on the green rectangle  
Never afraid of those huge creatures  
It's thirty years ago

8. You go up there cocked

Each of them must have been terrified  
Their center blocks out and the ball  
Was balanced on the edge of the platform  
Fanaticism? No. Writing is exciting  
Thank God

9. As the man next door on his porch

At eight I was brilliant with my body  
After practice: right foot  
Most mornings I get away, slip out  
That one long year we moved  
There are so few photographs of him  
Like the other day in Detroit  
The pitcher shot her husband  
The high hard one – up  
Bravado among cars, tempting fate  
The river turns  
For years I've watched the corner for signs  
These days  
I stop

10.

The gun full swing the swimmer catapults and  
The beautiful excess of Jesus on the waters  
In the end when the doctors circle around  
The sun rising over the mountains  
I'm back after twenty years of baiting the trap of the past  
You are tired

When you get there  
Be perpendicular to the basket

## The Catastrophe

This is strange tongue in the form of a heart where atoms of color dance, colors of manifestations on the soft ground of conscience. This is an illustrated fish, a little blue fork or prongs as incarnations. This is a bucket of energy, a barred spiral. This sand bar permits the passage of blood with variations, horizontal. Light. This light is on a dark blue ground or a deep red ground or a midnight green ground, a disk of dancing metal arrows, all show. Ruling colors of the spiral, precipitous, terrifying, an ancient treaty. Give up the idea of the state. Can it be said? To whom can it be said? To someone's father or mother? The world, night, demolition of homes, control of water. Lack of water. Build and destroy. Trial. Walls of the moat or the room, their design and multiplication, constant dialogue of light and shade. Narrow verticals. Rise. All rise. Rare and free. Or rather free. A little free. An image of redefining, explicit, the point of the arrow, head down. Twice the energy. Little known and less represented. Observed in various visible forms, clarity, display. Evolving. The many. The tongue as haptic form evoking that principle.



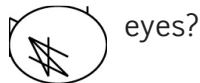


ACTION

*For in our actions we are not passively aimed like a gun, we are not passively  
straightened like a tablecloth.*  
Hendrik Walter

a cloud? a clown? a cloud of  
singing frogs?

...learning to read in secret...  
as a surprise, so reading  
offered as a gift? a sculpture  
come alive, talking and singing—  
white face painted red red mouth



“sorry to take away your bookmark”

Making up

the mind  
Q-How do you know when it's done?  
Q-Is it done?  
like sugar, like coke?

conventions

The banality of code (any code) define  
are required in order to define the un-  
containable/boundless rhythms, the body  
of the attempt, the outcast, other  
collaborations?

Seeing history every day what does it mean? And the other is a shadow wing. And the person doesn't arrive because: doesn't return: doesn't find the place: arrives but doesn't identify the other: does identify the other but changes his mind: after all: the person behind the counter is smiling in spite of the violence: everything: the sleeping bag, finally the dress: arrives: that banishment of all prior speculation

Action ~~speaks~~ and still is.  
This time, the flowers left on the roof of the car.  
Day, reusable? The sky, astounded by  
or astonished by the sky such as it is  
or I could have done otherwise?  
Days are always the first to know.  
Take the show by the middle.

figure/ground  
"subject"

vs

field  
subject?

paper under skin, skin, sound, outstanding in the pattern, lamplit on the Ruby Range

TRACE, tracework, the farther that falls — "SOUND A WAY"

pass a time

calamity, or the structure of thought

alerting her, they don't usually die of it.  
*They constructed the arena at the end of the first century and it was active until the third, the date of the first destruction of the city. The stones were then removed. They were then reused to construct the foundations and the walls of the next city where the population sought refuge. At that time the amphitheater became the burial ground.*

in the other pattern for the sound, but it's not what I mean. There, I've said it.

## A Waka\*

My dog Stoutie is a stout little pal, kind of sugary, damp little nose, especially when he wants to go for a waka.

\*Japanese 31-syllable poem form

FLOATING BY

*for David Bowie*

“abundant” and “not true” somehow sets up the sound (elements active, activating, enacting, selecting)

somehow sets up the tides of sound that convincingly present “unchanging” as asking for “heaven” it’s from my first body, actually, carrying them in  
but his is a strange and unheard of polish made of  
distance and intimacy

GO BACK ONCE

the young falconer holding a hawk,  
marvered glass eyes, threw his  
shoulder into the heart of another  
gilt heart

the solar systems that the song remembered, within the outside world, referred light,  
an image called thought to the place beyond "it's grave inside my head too"

*amrita*, elixir of  
immortality almost  
recognize losing  
return, turning

#### DON'T KILL THE DUST

dotted rhythm of disruption  
dust off "bewilderment"  
silent window, free radio  
of "our" youth "I meant it"  
deepest thought - I did

these things are real, unguessed in air, child of science, of space, universe: is there a  
5<sup>th</sup> dimension? can time run backwards? can love be lost?

hOULeS

New Orleans, 15 November 2002

*orthorexia*

I thorax ore

He haxe root

O hair to rex

+

*aerobicist*

I ciber toast

Rose tibiatic

Sit arice o

=

\*Toast to Rex\*

he haxe root o hair  
I thorax ore I ciber  
rose tibiatic o sit  
arice

## Units for Tomorrow

The fighting fish at first looks just like a fish. The picture of evolution in the strangeness of what was occurring. We didn't know. In the vivid familiarity of our lives. What was happening at the payphone. It wasn't yet known. It was a time of exuberant niches hit across. An unexpected and burgeoning. In a squat. Source of which. Not yet a test for it. Photons and compressed air. A continuous scansion of the inner ear. The outer world symbolic sociophysical universe in order to discover. Where to adapt. To reset what was out of kilter. The unaccountabilities. Our collision will be elastic. Importation into it. In general the pattern for the time. Dearest Mae. Time to go. We are battered. So this letter is wet. A conversion myth. Oops, readership. "Inescapable morphology" what's yours? Dropping slowing cutting across Rossetti's dream "I said the water was choppy." Attack, decay. The body slop. The birthday came and went. The picture the vividness. Flowers on the hillside and the stench of burning flesh, the reporter said. In the shantytown.

You have a sweet voice, une voix douce, una dolce voce,

Saint Ives  
Lands End

Grasse  
Vence

Bar du Loup

At a prayer site in the cemetery on a burial ground and relocation on paper. On paper, for generations, for the future, on your bread, on your back, in your practice, at present no explanation undevourable at the barbecue, at a friend's, in the house before the movers come, at the table, on the carpet, at the beach, in a dream, reading, in the city

It was my faucet I was looking up. What I want is inviolate. "delirium of reason. It sets its sights on paradise (glorified generality)." a camel with a tiny saddle, a spare tire, turn viridian, grey fingernails arranged in a fan on the waiting-room wall: rain, ocean, heart, night, stream, glow between. People sleeping in the house.

IN MEMORIAM JACQUES DERRIDA

There is no Waste Land.  
Jessie L. Weston

Monkeys!?! Are they all  
monkeys?  
Tired monkeys.

D'you know that during the rococo  
period  
—of the eighteenth century  
you monkeys were given a new  
identity by representing the  
exoticism of the Far East  
—I would fain hope...

Verily, kiddo, I walk  
among monkeys as among  
the foreskins and limbs  
of monkeys—monkeys  
in ruins.

gala or apocalypse,  
apocalypse or

a part of the body, a  
secret part

But let's go for a moment to  
the great ecumenical current  
the discovery or the great  
unveiling—I kid you not—  
the ear whispering under its veil of hair—  
or the milky way—study the tone  
itself—



(I kid you not) the clock  
chimes midnight—bong bong bong etc.  
what changes a tone, what  
causes a rupture of tone? How  
does one distinguish—

He was just starting to get to the  
Heideggerian conjugation of the  
personal. La! Re-signing himself.

Come, come.

Then his  
signature will have taken place.

His signature has  
taken place.  
Monkeys—love 'em or leave 'em.

Dear Robert,

Hi, just wanted to check in with you, see what's happening. I was reading your "ACHILLES' SONG," the first poem in *GROUNDWORK: Before the War* in which Thetis promises Achilles not a boat but the mirage of a boat. There is always a "before the war," isn't there. Some war. Another war. Miss you.

Love,

Norma

P.S. and back of that war  
"the deeper unsatisfied war"

T H E B O D Y I S S O F T

J'ai plus de souvenirs que si j'avais mille ans.  
*Baudelaire, "Spleen"*

full sea

outside the self

doesn't matter if it's real or not.  
suddenly you aren't one of them  
any more

apple, table or hand

the pink sky

"...the magnificence of it."  
*(Robert Duncan)*

+

the arrival of sound

the rawness under the skin

while read

Funny Sunday, or A Word

"carry" at the grave  
sight of redness  
under the skin

the mute universal

concrete operations: their life  
was social enough

come here

Who's Helen?

+

Rascal

seeking to be  
matched with  
reality

PAVEWAY

(laser)

marked/formed

using flares as  
decoys until they  
gone

+

declensions

“simple travellers”  
(*L. Sterne*)

work done by hand,  
by eye

outstript

that is  
the work

the camera sees  
all the way down

+

my face as well  
as my house

so no matter how you  
look at it

the opposite of  
sweet homage

distance I  
I watch distance

+

special powers

but the body is soft

“We write in sand”  
*(Edmund Waller)*  
*nak ta* ancestors

everything is  
in play

+

placing myself in the \_\_\_\_\_

tension & attention

“(the sacred furrow, the towers of  
sand, and so forth)”

*(David P. Chandler)*

named “dog” “imperfect” “red  
in the face” “loves justice” “Dharma” or  
flower names for girls  
= slave names

lightning will guide you

+

leapt off a leaf

is the next step

the emblem of the  
endless problem

sticks with heads  
braided ribbons  
but the marshes are gone

“Weighed in the balance, hero’s dust  
Is vile or vulgar clay”

*(Lord Byron)*

swoons and staggers

“like before” or like  
“before”  
(just) anyone you’ve never met

+

wall, dear, floor

house of light like a loom  
mutable will, house of hope

tree boxcar light  
water thunder

narrative is  
the body  
so breathe

the means to go back

on the other side of  
what wax cylinder

*oma mori* (wish sack, Japan)  
god is mental

+

*mukei* “formless”

ground to a halt? new  
or hiatus

“Entrare nell’Opera”  
(*Giovanni Anselmo* 1971)

the mystery bank, a dearth

of self

He talked about the cool  
fragrant fields in the early  
morning, going out to pick  
beans.

Monday, sound post  
towards the end of body  
art found wanting

+

drive time

but the body is sand  
or glass—the mutational  
corporation

on a low concrete structure  
by the water, nursing the baby

freedom= rough “participation”

lay claim to hand and foot  
the double feature, the third hand

his right hand  
                  the Nurse  
          the native land

+

Epimetheus

of objects as of  
bodies



braiding and nesting

they want to be kisses

accordingly  
community that  
finds itself  
as image

suffered from time madness

these kinds of displays  
a fiction or a treatise

such days have always  
been a dream

+

string theory  
tableaux

the free will again

no one  
elected them

a dispute to which  
one returns "I didn't  
do that"

to all the people in  
the country

a string of beads  
or maybe pearls

+

Observatory Time

what if my two hands  
in your life

sensory drives motor

gestures? the army  
already (drew a  
blank) fired  
on the crowd  
next thing you know

not showing all  
sides of any  
one thing

+

that window "uchronia"  
(memory under construction)

overlooking the immaculate  
thingamajig

the pencil of nature  
the tangled antennae

the polis hermetic  
beloved machines

scuds rubber sirens  
burning cloud

+

minutes pass

their leaves were moving  
a do-it-yourself kit

has moved away  
gray rust blue  
pink blue

*buku laut*  
a fish called Book  
of the Sea

the shining in  
the brain: do we  
have a dream

on earth and time

+

other passwords

signal a  
kind of second  
sight or maybe  
the air

and the partly cloudy  
fullness thereof

the annunciation “I came here  
for the signs”

lateral reading  
working hand, eye

+

remember the night

the Café Aqueduct  
the book is

a remainder  
of the next book

view of the lake  
red-tailed hawk  
flying over

the light is your  
night too

+

the shapes, feel  
them  
momently random

memory becomes  
expectancy  
“as witnessed by”

our wars  
the findings

(fr)agile  
slicing a lemon

a form of motion  
a finishing

+

*Before the mind catches up  
the body's been and gone.*

no my hedge  
it's not that I've reversed my vest  
like all habits  
I insist on it  
to my knowledge  
a butcher's work  
keystone or plum stone  
something I've learned to see

#### Sarabande

“and then looks at  
the stars” from the  
bed in the ambulance

looks up at boughs of  
trees shifting quickly  
lit in blackness

blackening soft, deep  
siren's song—she died  
several times that night

and only in the weeks  
to come started and  
started to come back

then forward which is  
real life



## Also by Norma Cole

### Poetry books & chapbooks

*Mace Hill Remap* (Paris: Moving Letters, 1988)

available online at <http://www.durationpress.com/authors/cole/home.html>

*Metamorphopsia* (Potes & Poets, 1988)

*My Bird Book* (Littoral, 1991)

*Mars* (Listening Chamber, 1994)

*Moirra* (O Books, 1995)

*Contrafact* (Potes & Poets, 1996)

*Quotable Gestures* (CREAPHIS/un bureau sur l'Atlantique, France, 1998)

*Desire & its Double* (Instress, 1998)

*The Vulgar Tongue* (a+bend, 2000)

*Spinoza in Her Youth* (Omnidawn Press, 2002)

*A little a & a* (Seeing Eye Books, 2002)

*Burns* (Belladonna Books, 2002)

*Do the Monkey* (Zasterle, 2006)

*Natural Light* (Libellum, 2009)

*Where Shadows Will: Selected Poems 1988-2008* (City Lights Publishers, 2009)

### Text & Image

*SCOUT*, text/image work in CD ROM format (Krupskaya, 2004)

*At All: Tom Raworth & His Collages* (Hooke Press, 2006)

### Translations

*It Then* by Danielle Collobert (O Books, 1989)

*The Surrealists Look at Art: essays by Aragon, Breton, Eluard, Soupault, Tzara*, edited and translated with Michael Palmer (Lapis Press, 1990)

*This Story is Mine: Little Autobiographical Dictionary of Elegy* by Emmanuel Hocquard (Instress, 1999)

*A Discursive Space: Interviews with Jean Daive* (Duration Press, 1999)

*Crosscut Universe, an anthology of poetry / poetics by contemporary French writers*, edited and translated (Burning Deck, 2000)

*Nude* by Anne Portugal [*Le Plus simple appareil*] (Kelsey Street Press, 2001)

*Distant Noise* by Jean Frémon (with Lydia Davis, Serge Gavronsky, Cole Swensen) (Avec Books, 2003)

*Notebooks 1956-1978* by Danielle Collobert (Litmus Press, 2003)

*The Spirit God and the Properties of Nitrogen* by Fouad Gabriel Naffah (Post-Apollo Press, 2004)

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