



# syntaxicon

Steven John Thompson

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In fond memory of

Jack McManis

who spied Hart Crane and William Carlos Williams in

my flight with metaphor and

John Haag

who espied my fight with enjambment as

a wondrous winnable war

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Ils en conclurent que la syntaxe est une fantaisie et la grammaire une illusion.

Gustave Flaubert, Bouvard et Pécuchet

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# POEMS

justaposition

man eating ants

Wednesday Wander

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bro-kin

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air apparent

In 2004 we saw in Kabul

chainsaw eulogy

tunnel vision

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Terminal

doxology



## justaposition

I read of poets and what a crew we  
are time travelers often inducing  
nonsense seduced by the future after  
death collapsed like plants or  
pretty flowers night gently  
shuts to playful whispers.

The preacher says Abraham was  
a bright businessman Abraham  
was is not for some of us sufficient yet  
by faith whom faith calls up yonder he  
looked for a city whose builder and  
settles for the unknown was God.



Funny man so quick to jump I none the  
wiser anywhere but here had never  
contemplated suicide or desperate  
thought how still peace seeing through  
my fearful eyes I foolishly you see  
cannot understand such hatred.

Condemnation is not on my list of  
virtues what can be so ugly in life but  
poets mainly poets death swallows hell all  
known perceptions who live life to the  
fullest strangling on blinding  
man every little word.





## man eating ants

I walked these boards a young  
man bare feet followed Julie  
Dohr from school several hundred  
miles my furthest trip from  
home I even worked where she  
worked but in Kitchen No. 1 making  
clams casino lobsters thermidor oysters  
Rockefeller and crab cakes when  
I went into the walk-in once outside  
the room where fat women pitter and  
patter meat from zillions of battered  
crusty crabs into shapes similar to

hockey pucks when turning to leave  
spilled two full trays while cleaning  
up looked up to the face of an owner who  
knelt to take his delicate cakes from the  
walk-in drain and placed them on their  
trays quite gingerly he pittered and  
pattered them like the fat women  
I passed outside going back to  
Kitchen No. 1 so I ate there only  
once ever though failed to order  
crab and now these crusty creatures  
trapped inside their hollow shells fat  
memories battered frantically asea by  
scurrying little insect thoughts that gnaw  
and tear and shriek and devour till  
nothing's left but brutality banging  
on broken boards determined not  
to be just a man eating ants.





## Wednesday Wander

It must be only a mile one way but clichéd  
I walk the dog this dogdayafternoon and  
question the motives behind wrought iron  
bars covering doors and windows of so  
many neighborhood bungalows.

Many are decorative enough to be works  
of art yet who would stalk the inside peering  
out through steely bars if not the fearfully  
guilty—the threatened?

And who would dare threaten amidst these



vast throes of white lilacs sweet scores of  
bougainvillea birds of paradise even  
plumb wild geraniums?

I live here for night jasmine bespeaks  
my vulnerable mind purging any  
threatening forces pounding  
irreverently hard against my  
most impenetrable entrances.





## Advice to the Lovelorn

This guy in the booth in front of me is built like a small pachyderm scaling rashes on the back of his neck these coffee shops are full of broken people who lived here and are dying now being offered their favorite chemical blends on the way out and convinced it is the water cancering their lives while I eat their donuts and pizza and see their fats reflected in my face in this monitor and know one good flu will burn it all off but these are the ruminations of youth lost of love of the unrequited the gone opportunity noted while passing through these small towns in Pennsylvania named after German and Swiss counterparts adjacent to those named after coal mining industries where fuelish fracking and roman calcoholicism rule the

poor more now than in any earlier life yet more significantly  
there must be some solution to this leprosy whether self-imposed  
or otherwise this unwieldy sadness steadily punctuated with  
false hopes that go nowhere in this rising destiny of failing  
flesh this son-of-a-bitch of a storm that curses each  
horizon in our courses of progress delineated  
betwixt the sacred and profane they're  
cursing Obama they're cursing their  
government they're cursing the  
Christ in between mouthfuls  
of plastic pastry particles and  
creamy GMOs so angry at  
the way things were and  
angry at the way things  
are and angry on the  
intricate way back to the  
dirt that inexplicably must  
smother them end to end.





## bro-kin

Ariadne Diaz-Marroquín rings my cell to  
invite me over and away from the lone coming  
cold threatening my broken window but there  
is no invitation to succor this bitterness wildly  
staring from its empty seat across from mine despite  
the cook-peppered crunchy cob of corn that so  
intrigues my upper lip and gentle golden liquid  
butter weeping over my mashed potatoes there is no  
running from any cold nowhere to go there is no.

Yet we only see this festering this  
striving this unletting go that keeps  
haunting through the agings across these

great divides above this gross ingratitude this  
is no earnest henley enraged in storms against a  
god and due enter-nity no bold poetic taunt towards  
blackness no searchlight flicks on walls in caves of  
shadows but a steady digital slap of electronic  
awareness and surveillance always ahead beyond  
complexities of a single simple tile mosaic beyond  
the clap and the technobabble an exponential  
instant shudder of flux this rising extremity of  
clamor and physique of deeply pushed data of  
iphonic sleuthery sensoric touch this  
pulsing frustration beating us outwardly to  
expanding holes and inside with whips of  
diligence for the endless youthful rising is  
a narcotic hypnotic carmina burana chilling  
the nothing tomb as a crystal blue martini  
glass sits frozen and waits for its dizzying  
elixir of crushed bone and tattered  
tissue and genome headed for that big  
surprise the way of all flesh the ensuing bitter  
or bidden bliss in the coming of no cold lapping  
at the memory lapsed by awakenings in  
the wisped mortality of some encephalitic  
surge of missing of messing of monument of  
monumental non-movement of more of  
and for everything moored to time and



rhythm and sinew and rhizome and  
traces of distances found lying in  
the depths of some gutter perhaps  
alongside one crowded supermarket  
cart that has escaped electronic  
surveillance boundaries for now for  
living supermarket carts.

Dylan taught us everything is  
broken but wisdom says it's  
this pretentious pastiche this  
unrelenting unwieldy mystique it's  
unfamiliar familial betrayal and  
turncoat testicles residing in  
kin it's this unforgiving syn  
tax the blistered the chronic the  
screwed the moronic the eschewed  
the demonic the waiting the coming  
cold crying over it's over it's empty gone  
byebye so worthless so meaning less this  
nothingness beckons beyond all past all God  
Nos a torrid sea of ceaseless beings bro-  
ken bro-kin.



## i maiMnid am

Today the world cups for the needy and the takers run over with generous gifts for any salvation any peace or respite the prayers and endless pleas rise for the helpless and even the hypocritical silent requests that help keep our churches country clubs instead of hospitals yet you haven't thought of that now you can hear her coming towards you on the same stretch of sidewalk not in direct confrontation at least not this known occasion and she doesn't just tear at the sensory overwhelms of this hypered day's experience for she runs deeper than any tear or rip or lesion and lower than any gap or abyss beyond all practical

human resolution lucky for you or call it sweet  
destiny maybe release your breath for now you  
are one of the fortunate sons since she is lost and  
to you right now and taken over by some other  
realm in cursings and sulphured blasphemies in  
obscene skyward gestures you stole from a  
glance typical of stranger humans who cross in  
similar scenario yet you had to look since  
her figure was a starlet's long straight hair in  
her approach framing her hidden till turned  
twisted face shockingly weathered to the bone from  
the legion moving with her within her what would  
appear to be insanity and you know darn well  
this is not subjection of kings resigned to  
years of eating grass you know damn well  
insanity doesn't look like this or act like that or  
roar or hate and spew like that but volcanoes  
do and dirty bombs yet she has snapped her  
focused gaze past you untouched by all her  
given gifts unscathed by platitudes or bequests  
beyond the care of any human cause while she  
must be if she's to ever know release she is not  
the subject of anyone's prayers no not the lilting  
dancing daughter arrived here full of lifetime  
schemes no memorial to Mulholland Dr but  
behold the Babylon blasted mothering whore of

ten thousand tempests screaming at the top of  
their unlungs out of hers for those not  
keenly listening just for you a sanely  
strolling newly shaken  
passerby in  
Miami.





## air apparent

it was worth the rain for most the  
day to surprisingly step through to this  
wonderfully wet world so much Magritte yet  
more splashes of Parrish clouds dripped  
with precious metals here on the side of  
the bridge where I walk I cannot help  
but pierce with stark distinction of  
dualities the eastern sky smoldering  
under a mighty autumn tempest inking  
the river an industry like the Dickens  
off the peripheral hemisphere  
arcing my left shoulder.

while plating the water as Maxfield  
would with a fury of laced electric  
strata thoughts gently nudge me beyond  
the sunset to a more perfect world yet  
tottering over this massive span a  
scale tips in favor of its giant eyelids  
leaning weights at max his pieces of  
eight slipping slowly through violet  
clouds drifting violently past the sun till  
falling like concrete wheels wrapped round  
steel clusters tons of iron crashing into the  
breathtaking void this bridge divides.





## In 2004 we saw in Kabul

faces towering over then justly tortured  
faces of death shiny new faces of freedom  
faces of hope faces unveiled clean-shaven

the face of a kite now flies freely high in  
the face of what is left of murder forced  
to face the sound of music while joyous  
faces once lost behind burka or scruff  
dance down dirt streets of taliban death

and whose death is this anyhow but co-  
horts to evil for this history this stream



of sorrow now lying muddied face  
less or running scared to Kandahar

the face of one little girl sports a smile the  
promise of a future relief of sorts a cautious  
intangible glimmer that until this day held its  
breath beneath popped desert winds hurled  
with double awe against a distant peaceful shore

wandering through the dust of death atop tank  
and cruiser beam faces of triumph faces of  
exultation faces forbidden once hidden revealed



## chainsaw eulogy

The Mexican has trashed the  
bougainvillea leaving a couple dozen  
blossoms and a lone stem bent skyward.  
Takemitsu is dead though his baton  
waves on despite being cut down like  
a weed this chainsaw morning while  
this afternoon Susan wept.

I enjoyed the bougainvillea too but she  
she lived for it yet I never knew she  
hated Mexicans on and on about his  
merciless ways she would have left them

intact a steady stream of bright crimson  
bliss carelessly caressing that ugly wire  
fence now anyone can see in and she  
takes no comfort knowing it  
will grow too thick again.

Takemitsu is dead though I hear  
him swelling in the seas of a distant  
orchestra pulled out by the roots on another  
chainsaw morning in Ventura windows wide  
open his arms chaotically surging over our  
storming airwaves the bougainvillea hanging  
on for dear life.





## tunnel vision

suppose the wind lay  
silent mercury smooth in  
your cupped white palms

suppose your smile would  
stir its sweet invisible breath  
in hypnotic trances of delight

suppose your pleasure frees  
your grasp only to kiss your face  
in wafting pillars of light perfume

suppose your treasure lingers about  
you longer than lost love you once had  
known and hoped would forever endure

suppose the wind inside you now would  
rouse your soul to unseen strength and  
fan the wisdom of your precious intellect

suppose a gang of priests kicked the wind out  
of you before burying your palms with hosanna  
spikes pounded deep into the heart of a nearby tree





## opus maximus

in a moment you passed by as just a  
blur across my vision nameless and  
I realized whoever you were from my  
past was not important because eventually  
we would connect even as I cross this  
walkway and the sun drops shadows over  
the snow covered grass I reflect on how you  
really were not there but will be one day surely  
not exactly in the literal place of there but  
near enough to recognize and your face will  
fill this void replace the temporary blinding and  
eventually we will connect not as if some new



age revelation were upon us because I did not see you there that way but only as a memory of someone who would one day be near enough for me to laugh with and recall how once I saw us eventually connect not in any physical sense but definitely in the physical where we might converse as old

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friends we are though not as old friends really are but as we are new yet old because we have both entered other physical worlds since and eventually we must connect if nothing more than to reflect on how we thought about each other often or perhaps viewed one another as nothing more than a blur or shadow crossing one another's visual periphery waiting and wondering how one day we might connect even like a fetus or an embryo almost stillborn but only in the sense of still waiting for our pending births while trapped in time and its elements till we eventually connect and we reflect upon those incidents that

touched our distanced  
lives since last  
connected.

I am often struck to interrupt my  
life and question how it gets like  
this so bizarre confined to one small  
planet yet no talk here of fiber optic  
telephones telepathy or dark  
Jungian recesses of the derelict but  
a simple thought that eventually we  
would connect not in some cosmic  
chance or predestination though  
almost as a prophecy engorged and  
pregnant patiently waiting while  
holding myth a mystery until some  
bright epiphany wakes our trappings in  
the embryo lying still yet sucking life from  
some wild pomegranate source which is  
but may not necessarily be sucking on  
another since we can structure life solely  
around the detriment of self not connect  
ing to anything but nanotubes we must some  
day for sure for more than just to feed our

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frenzy and again I do not see you that way for  
you to me are a pleasant touch I yearn

for not with passion or intensity but  
as the finger finds a silent crack in  
the womb a bleeding not in gushes of  
blood but a steady stream of light flowing in  
search of some hidden crevice and waiting till  
time itself will stop to connect on facebook  
linkedin or twerk or tweet to this miracle of  
birth pulsing its beat through strewn muscle  
flesh sinew bone synapse until finally  
screaming we eventually connect not  
waiting any longer to be born of no  
small happenstance out we come dangling  
some taught invisible cord wondering if  
one day even we unwittingly will be  
forced to throw in the sweet placenta of  
our defeat sweat soaked bleeding  
inside and gnashing pearly  
teeth before being totally  
disconnected.





## your death my dream

soon as I woke I realized us  
riding the same ride side by  
side I touched you with news of  
your dying as we all are you once  
really said yet even faster I can  
see until I woke to see  
you as you were in  
September in the arms of  
your living room wife heart  
arrested dead in the ambulance  
cry of a faraway day to break into  
pieces the finest of chinas to night  
fall into my deepest of dreams





## abandon meant

Were you my father would you  
buy me the moon or abandon  
me from the womb let others  
love me through this life while  
you defend those who pay you  
more than well enough to do  
so would you have spoken to  
me maybe 10 times total in  
my entire life to date which by the  
way had I been Jesus would have put  
me in the grave last year too late for  
concern on your part as you plan to

put the grandkids through school or  
would you care less that I may be  
fighting tooth and nail to get an honest  
education and may very well never get  
one maybe would never have seen your  
face and had that one specific episode to  
recall for the rest of my life had I not  
taken initiative by the throat to head to  
California some 15 countless years ago?

Wait. You're not my father.

You're just a filthy rich lawyer who holds  
his breath and sinks into fine rose otto  
leather when he dreams long distances or  
spies another Pennsylvania postmark.



# Terminal

Thoughts now trail in wisps of  
what was once your poor excuse for  
arms enshrouding my neck fiercely  
locking together clinging for life as if  
suspended from a massive girder steadily  
whirling in time and space spinning and  
whirring encircling some lovesick  
orb somewhere beyond the sweltering  
pain of this our dying room.

Your dead weight hunches me in  
rising slowly your face a breath  
away in sync with mine though  
yours breathless my back the  
crane that chains you from your  
troubled quarry pulls your dark  
eyes hollow as midnight  
sun into mine while silently  
you're questioning everything.

Till eternity comes I won't forget my  
jerks from sleep at 4 am your  
anxious cries for popsicles your  
slurping wondrous juices over  
blistered lips across the remains of

your rat torn tongue refreshing your  
orifice streams of soothing colored  
ice flowing across one huge  
black canker from the chemo.

I talk with you melt into your drain we  
disbelieve as the blood of fire pours over  
our heads our bludgeoned hearts till  
Jesus comes you settle down and I  
go to my room lie there sweaty from  
your dreams before morning steals  
through your mini-blinds and I'm forced  
to rise exhausted take to your side to  
rub your feet swollen as the sea.

You strain for words for strength  
your eyes enveloping the air for  
everything including me your  
gentle song all that remains what I  
retain inside where worlds collide in  
gasps of smoke not as once filled you and  
me we have no words no choice you  
have no voice your gaze beyond  
the void then back at me.

I leave your side but for the day return to  
find you curled on the floor asleep your

fragile frame no longer in control and yet  
you're past embarrassment now beyond all  
vanity as sirens roar the air hangs hard I tell  
you to hang on and you agree before I hear  
your last request to sit you up those splendid  
eyes for the very last time forging steel into  
mine and once for all I fail you.

Because technicians now are in control and  
me I'm out of control not really sure just  
what you said and you you're being  
carried out the door upon your back all  
yielded to this afternoon scene a stick  
rushed down the street and out of  
sight but only till I drive myself behind  
arrive and wait for the time I'll  
fight my last on earth with you.

Because you struggle with your mask and no one  
sees your air suppress until an aide becomes  
aware and oceans spread your peaceful lips peeled  
and raw black eyes deep shut grey head thrown  
back your outstretched hand now squeezes  
God's you focus keen while where I stand  
time parches on and boils down to  
hiss no wave goodbye I watch  
you die.





## doxology

please deliver me to some  
sweet idyllic stop beyond  
a wayward star beyond  
this place of wrath and  
recalcitrant fear a place  
of quiet rectitude more  
constant than the sun even  
quieter than the sun much  
mightier than the BBC than  
CNN a realm past drugs far  
from these tears no dust bunny  
heaven fashioned by our own  
clutched fists or all the billy

joels out there but made for  
us created and designed as if we  
could not choose as if we need our  
mothers picking out clean clothes to  
lay upon our blanketed beds and  
tender fathers being nothing  
more than there and merciful  
friends exuding cheer while  
wielding alabastered fragrances to  
a yielding open wound or seeping  
wild honey gently oozing our  
wild eyes in perpetuity  
please                      God

smother me with a still  
infinitesimal voice

bury me alongside blaring  
trumpets of ending voyage

but wake me into one  
inescapable inexplicable  
peace

world

without

sirens

amen

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## STEVEN JOHN THOMPSON · PHD

Steven John Thompson is an editor and professor focused on Internet phenomena and emerging technologies. Steve published pioneering quantitative research in 1996 on Internet addiction and dependency. He has theorized on agency of icons to iconics to iconetics in artificial intelligence.

Steve lives in Savannah with his cats: Bravery, Bethany, and her daughter, Linda. Special thanks to Paul Levinson, Rob Pappas, and Philip Trader. Visit [steve.ws](http://steve.ws).

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