

RHINOCEROTICA

by

Austin Sanchez-Moran

A Thesis

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in Partial Fulfillment of

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of

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Committee:

Director

Department Chairperson

Dean, College of Humanities
and Social Sciences

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Austin Sanchez-Moran
Master of Fine Arts
George Mason University, 2015

Director: Jennifer Atkinson, Professor
Department of English

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ABSTRACT

RHINOCEROTICA

Austin Sanchez-Moran, M.F.A.

George Mason University, 2015

Thesis Director: Jennifer Atkinson

Rhinocerotica is a collection of poems tracing one man's growth in interest for the arts through an examination of certain pieces of artwork and ending in the title poem where the personal, political, and the imagination collide.

The 'Rhinoceros' poems are derived from memory and misremembered dreams. The exploration of my own childhood memories of being introduced to art, dreams of floods, dreams of dying, and my Spanish heritage and history create the group of poems in this mostly narrative sections.

The second section 'Erotica' contains referential, strong-voiced lyrics of both the sexual and ekphrastic, which explore the ego or the lack thereof in an artist; specific men or women in visual art; and inanimate objects that are not explicitly sexual.

The surreal and final section, 'Rhinocerotica' is collaged, personal, historical, political, contains high and low cultural references, and aims to excite and inspire. I want to try to capture a communal climax through amalgamation.

After Reading Too Much Creeley, Overlooking Montmartre Cemetery

I wrote a long-winded suicide note
in tight tercets, "...name, the darkness
sur-/rounds us, what/can we do against

it, or else, shall we &..." I hung
it off my balcony with some masking tape,
to face the crypts of Truffaut and Degas.

Maybe the minor ghosts would disapprove
of this affected gesture- asking
the majors to look up and laugh,

but how else will I know I'll be enclosed
above ground, feeling the rain,
getting wet with a decent happiness.

I. RHINOCEROS

On Not Viewing "American Masters: Alexander Calder"

I fell asleep in my smock
on a paint-splattered stool
on the last day of 3rd grade.

The teacher had popped in a tape
and behind the white static lines,
a firm voice spoke of "retrospective".

Two white-haired men strolled in
under huge, wiry hangers of red
balancing steel in the sunlit afternoon.

As my eyes blinked shut,

their fingers pointed up
towards the white sky
and I fell to dreaming

I was being told something
I would want to listen to
when I woke up.

In Common Time

They made me play
 something in the 4th grade.
We were given a sheet of paper
 in the cafeteria
with pictures of 4 stringed instruments.

I circled the one $\frac{3}{4}$ down the line.
 Only $\frac{3}{4}$ - the size of myself.
 I received a $\frac{3}{4}$ size cello.

My cello rested its back
 on my shoulder.
Its body lay between my legs.
My thumb nudged back
 against its neck.
It was an odd position to be in.

I was $\frac{3}{4}$ ready when we learned
 to play the 4th movement
of the Brandenburg. I held
 dotted half notes
in 4/4 time and then I rested.

I soon got used to my cello's arcs
 between my knees,
the scroll and F-holes
 always facing away.
But, I never got past 3rd chair,
 closest to weakest,
a young cellist, still learning to bow.

Upon Cutting Myself
Shaving on My 24th Birthday

Besides that speck of grey,
I thought I saw
those crow's feet nested
in the corners of my eyes,

there was a red run,
that cut through the cream,
that dripped off my chin,
into the sink water.

What a cheap thrill
for an old man, remembering

his Swedish au pair
in ruby heels
teaching him
to dance to MTV
on the day he found out
that his grandfather died...

But now, consider the future.

Church Rd., III

The sun salts
the grass in March.

The wet eyes
of the unkempt,
fenced-in front lawns
are blind patches of snow.

The jungle gym-ed
backyards dry slowly.

The Episcopalian
(Gothic Revival)
looms wearily
on the corner

as pews recite Proverbs
and radiators,
all down the block,
rumble in disbelief.

The Salad Spinner

My mother let
me help her cook
at an early
age. I got to
use my muscle
to take control
of the kitschy
salad spinner.

And I spun it
with such power,
the drying leaves
suddenly set
afame, like sky-
rockets burning.
The colander
lifted away.

Disappearing
through the ceiling.
The dark kitchen
I conjured up
had me shaking,
the chandelier
out of control
and I in awe.

And this persists.
My green chaos
shows no restraint.
But I don't know
to be afraid.
The great lettuce
of the world spins
all around me.

Nostalgia Sequence

1.

My right eye
and just my right
eye cried, as I
lay down on my side-
walk in front of the house
where I used to live.

The socket on top
flooded and crept
over the bridge
of my nose, to the left
eye, onto the slate
pavement,
my vision reft.

2.

If whatever one loves
well is beautiful,

then this is a line
drawn back over

itself on a plain
white sheet, dulling

the graphite of innocence
down,
repetitiously.

3.

The ocean can teach
loss, the coastline,
division

but the ribbon thin
vanishing point
wiles in the swells

where I stand,
ankle deep in sand
knee deep in water
and sinking.

Suburban Sleeping

Launched from out
of my wet, dark mouth,
a ship, iron-

clad, navigates
the hallways that channel
from my bed.

The front door
unlocks, swings wide
then the stern,

cruising down
my calm sea
street, is gone.

But to leave
a wake in
all the neighbors' eyes.

Afternoon in the Manner of De Chirico

A wooden sailboat floats towards a marble staircase, its' first steps underwater. The mast has snapped and five boys, privileged sailors' sons, shiver. All in white shirts, white shorts, white shoes and neon orange life preservers. Wispy fog hides the coastline of lower Lake Michigan, the elm forest and the pebbled beach, but this peninsula has cut crabgrass and no trees. When the boat begins to shake on the rocks, the boys climb out onto the staircase, and walk up to the sloping lawn. They move away from the water, still as a group, and soon they notice there is no grand mansion for them to see, only statues of men, all looking away from the coast, looking away from them, all with their heads, hands, and naked torsos intact. As they continue to walk, arches, in the same white marble, are distinguished as the classical façade of an empty temple. And now the boys can see the empty beach and the forest along the peninsula's sides, but there is no doorway out to it. And looking back, they can no longer see the statues or the stairs. The clouds darken and their boat floats back into the lake.

Fragment on the Subway

When I see an old man
on the subway
nicely dressed,

even has a hat,
carrying flowers
I want to forgive with him.

To his grown son, estranged wife,
tell them,
“He’s not so bad,

he brought you flowers
on the subway,
I’ve never done that.”

I hope I can love
that late in life
that much

closer to its completion
I will want to know
I got what I wanted,

to be called beloved
and to feel beloved
on this earth.

Revisiting 72nd St., June

The vendor tells me that I better, “Buy two apples, they’re cheaper on the street.” I thank him and don’t know what to do with the second apple, as I chomp into the one I wanted.

A bouquet of carnations is left on a cab’s roof as a large businesswoman in a blue pantsuit tries to crawl into the back.

There is a definite curve to Columbus Circle like the cracking black macadam was built on a cylinder.

Joggers, heavy with cologne, pass by me, ducking their shoulders

and the steroidal hovering of the apartment buildings intimidates me less than the last time I looked up.

They all have multicolored scaffolds. And as rubble’s being tossed down into dumpsters, I think of elderly giants in tutus.

Turning the corner, more tiny dogs, more sunglasses on a cloudy day, more fishy sewer smells,

New York seems horrible, that’s why I’m going. New York is horrible and that’s why I’m leaving.

How many times can someone walk around the same city block?

Concerning Art Deco Buildings at the End of the World

Keep them.
And let the rest
be swept away.

Besides, everything
will soon be
post-modern anyway.

It'll be like a machine,
like symmetry,
a real sure thing.

Someone had even said,
"We're all gonna be
dressed up when it happens,

at the office,
at our desks,
maybe napping,"

And the water
will crawl up
the windows

crack the glass
and it won't matter
what floor we're on,

the 2nd, the 22nd, the 86th ...
Outside, observant
a muscle-carved man,

with a winged helmet,
stares towards
the marbled sky.

Will he learn to swim
when the entire
building goes underwater?

Early Rock and Roll History Underwater

Carmen Miranda samba-ed into a banana hat heart attack on Jimmy Durante's TV show.

Elvis greased his hair and sweat, shaking his hips on the hayrides, Chica Chica Boom Chic.

Joseph Kekuku crossed the Pacific to do shows coast to coast evoking the birdcalls of Oahu.

Hank Williams's lap steel guitarist played electrified, but still made it big with Koan wood.

The Flamingoes, The Orioles, The Crests, all sang with an underwater, methadone tremelo.

Link Wray gave back the feedback from his fans, filling the room with his oddball wah-wah.

Fats Domino worked a Bar-B-Que and heard a Voodoo Krewe Jazz Funeral during a hurricane.

Jerry Lee Lewis sauntered across to Natchez to tickle *somehin' else* in another juke joint.

Bo Diddley stewed up his own stomp-claved, patted juba, habanera, ham-boned backbeat.

Buddy Holly, giddy with his rockabilly hiccup, imbibed it all up, even stealing Bo's glasses.

The Day Before New Year's Eve, Manzanillo, Mexico

On the way home from a restaurant outside of town, my father driving and I, buckled in the backseat, started to count the purple bulbs on top of each cactus. It was dark and dusty and every few minutes we'd pass a white stucco well beside the road, reading, "AQUA POTABLE". Then, just as I had lost count, a soft light and the muffled sound of music came through the car. As we slowed to a stop, we saw a gathering. A few families had pulled to the side of the road and turned the lights of their trucks and their blaring radios on. The beams lit up a life-size nativity scene. The Rose of Guadalupe knelt in blue and sat under a half bathtub, as the tan-skinned porcelain Kings and Joseph leaned over the straw basket where the cabbage-patch doll Jesus lay. And everyone danced in the light. My mother said, "Look at that. They're celebrating New Year's already." She got out of the car, walked over to an old lady in black braids, who was sitting and clapping along, and after a few moments waved us over. My father groaned, said, "Come on..." and we danced for a few minutes on a ledge that over looked the whitewashed resorts and the town and the ocean.

Kids, the Lord is With Thee

Mothers of America,
introduce your kids to Motown!

Don't be fooled by baby
Mozart tapes.
They can't hear the symphony like you can,
your kids are not in you, anymore.

They have to find out
what becomes of the brokenhearted,
before they grow up
and become exactly the same as their parents.

Although their moves
are smoothly choreographed,
there's nothing more real than a dry kiss
from a zit-faced kid in her father's car.

Fathers of America-
Remember that long, blue-balled limp home
after she said she'd rather shop around.

You can hurry love, it turns out,
because the waiting hurts, it hurts like hell.

Either way the kids must learn
this heat wave is not a masquerade.

There is nothing sadder than the tears
of a clown
Who didn't learn Italian, or who never learned
the comedy is never over.

My Own Sapphic Fragments

I toss my dirty pants
into the washing machine.

They mingle with the linens.

Tide seeps into tight fabric.
Time has spun and sped up.

And what went forgotten
in that one deep pocket

quickly breaks down.

Paper goes back to its pulp,
ink gets lifted and fades,

and lines for poems dissolve

unsalvageable, as I try to dry
the torn bits that I could save.

What has stupidity given me?
Remains? Stained pants? Or

my own Sapphic fragments:

Orchids in the city
black-blue flames of plums
the loss of a parasol

A Man's Ballad for Thymos

I will die during an afternoon nap in September.
And because I will be retired,
I will be naked in my bedroom and it won't matter
if it's raining.

And because of all of the free time
I will have had, a small pile of poems will sit
on my night stand. And they'll explain my spirit
has been beaten down, hard, over and over again.

Some lines will say, I'm sure,
"I'm going to die and I'm afraid
I won't even get a tick of recognition."

But even with my bum knee,
my mended bones, my broken noses,
I won't forget I was born into the green rain.

I Confess, A Plan

I'll show you my
poems,

if you'll show me
yours.

Anyway,
how much are we,

really,
going to share?

Flashes, sugar cubes,
gulps of wine, inspiration.

There is a contradiction
to the lowercase "I".

And everyone knows that

the "I"
isn't always you.

I will show you my poems
if you will show me yours.

False Windows: A Museum Guard Song

To the Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.

Someone stole my *Dream Songs*
straight out of my locker
down in the employee lounge
where I worked. Sulking,
slamming it shut, heavily, I asked,
“What are we even working towards?”

Some of us just art students,
others blazered, older ladies
with not a lot to do, but all of us,
guardians, protecting the priceless.
But then someone, one of us,
had to go and steal my *Dream Songs*.

The *Dream* in green and the pink-lettered
Songs rose up from the deep black
cover, disappearing into the quiet
of the museum. I asked all
around the galleries, at last
to bathe in the shades of Rothko’s four oceans.

To the Woman in Front of the
Argentinian Embassy

I've never been to your country
But I'd heard that it's one of "The
Most European in all of
Central and South America",
Possibly.

And you sure are wearing your skirt
Like a flag.
That blue and white hanging over
Your building.

Did you know,
"Writing about music is like
Dancing about architecture."
I think that writing poetry
On the subject of poetry,
Is also a difficult thing.

So, maybe you could teach me the
Argentine style of dancing-
El Tango?
"Tu eres tu y eres mi,
Will you come on over and go
Dance with me?"

Making a Phone Call

First you want to try to call her. Then you realize she won't be there to answer, then pace around the room. Around the baby grand piano and the circular, dirtied rainbow rug, the glass Bauhaus table and black plastic Bauhaus chairs. Then you pull out your hair and put together your saxophone, which you haven't played since high school. And you remember that cute girl that sat near you and smiled in your direction with her trumpet in her lap. You look at the bookshelves, the frayed hardcover sleeves, you look at your empty leave-littered backyard and then you look at your phone again and begin to dial then you pause. She's not there. She will not be there to answer. You are calling an empty house. She will not answer. Then you hang up. You get a stomachache and you pace. What is wrong with you? You think about all the things that could make you a good candidate for Prozac. "My childhood dog died when I was in college, I really liked a grandmother who had a stroke and died. My hip clicks when I stand up after sitting for a long time"...Nothing qualifies... You decide to dial anyway... Fuck the answering machine. You need immediacy. Yes, you'll leave a message. "Hey, it's been too long, I just wanted to..." It doesn't matter. You pace some more. You sit down at the piano. You haven't really played since you were ten.

Sweetheart

After a Scene in *Sweet Movie* (1974) Directed By Dušan Makavejev

We lie in the hull,
even with the salty sea.
But in this boat there's a bed
of powdered sugar.

And I dig my tongue in.

So sweet, so fine.
Sweet, fine,
fine, sweet

feeling our spines line up
with the ship's ribs, over-
lapping, fitted, ribbing
altogether, enveloped.

And I am below you.

Tiny frames
inside a floating
frame. At the sea's

level, hearts feel safe
pumping their syrup
in a two-ton wonder.

And you are
the confectioner.

And I am
just a child.

NYC Ghazal

For Lou Reed

It's what I did last night that will make me want to sleep all day.
It's a mainline prick and pass-out, wiping crusty sleep all day.

I hate my body and hate it's white light in the white decay.
The haze stays pink in the subway green crowds sleep all day.

Night work with rubber goods, better than wood made in the U.S.A.
Early morning, Factory, whistle, blow, and I sleep all day.

"Whenever there's weeping, there's calamine," Caroline would say,
"conquer boxed sangria in the post-coital park, sleep all day."

Pumps, furs purr down my dirty boulevard, love has gone away.
It's what I did last night that will make you want to sleep all day.

Why Not Sneeze, Rose Sélavy?

A Sculpture by Marcel Duchamp, 1921

I. Lorca's Dream

O Granada!
 City of Conquests,
 City of God,

Rose Sélavy is now Jesus
and I grabbed her by the crotch,
and we fucked under the cork tree.

Out of her cage, out of her corset
and into her velvet hat and furs,
Rose poured out her purse,
down, for the weary streets to see.

First, her lipstick fell
and painted my lips only,
and then her sugar cubes landed
on all the city's heaving tongues

and while she shaded the sundrenched
with eyeliner, her thermometer
went to check my sweaty pulse again.

II. My Letter to Lorca, 2009

O Lorca!

Your City of Conquests,
City of God,

they paved over the Darro,
so they could sell more paper postcards and flamenco figurines.
And they dug a trench so a train can go out to the bus station,
where all the drag-queens have stopped wearing their make-up.

But I guess the piles of dog shit on the sidewalks are still the same.
And one can still get bull's brain tortillas in the small cafés.
And the gypsies even still live in their caves, like the lost boys,
slapping their hands and stomping their feet just to keep warm.

But it seems like a lot of the pedros packed up, moved to Madrid,
and sunk the countryside. The spine's been ripped out of a city
that's already been laid to rest. I just don't know what happened.

O Lorca!

Please, please, please, in your dreams, how long did 3 days take?
And how sweet were those fallen sugar cubes of Ms. Sélavy?

II. EROTICA

Old Vero Man's Sharp Hunger

“Some of the earliest Americans, turn out to have been artists.”

- The Associated Press, 6/22/11

He knew his beauty, his truth,
direct observation engraved
into a mammoth's pelvic bone.

He had been practicing on stone,
learning to put two eyes on just one
side of the Sole. He had caught his

share of Sheepshead with a twine
net in the gangly mangrove roots.
He took Snook with line and a hook.

These acts of longing were not
in short supply. The mammoth
could be, with a spear, his next meal.

Pulling off a ripened orange, still
in awe of the frequency of the rain, he
looks at the river, but thinks of the sea.

Snow at Louveciennes

Camille Pissarro, 1870

There comes a difference
in demeanor,
when growing older
allows me to see
the distant, blue
coated figure
in the pallored
landscape, not as alone
but splendid
with self-reliance.

Now, I find myself
in that wintry scene:
eyes tightening,
fluttering, squinting
and I reunite with
my brooding, colder self
as we both traipse back to
the heat of an evening
fireplace, with the hope
of all our childhood Sundays
strung together, safe
from responsibility.

Some triumphs come easy,
eyes adjust, coats dry out
and that season leaves us
washed out, abandoned,
with only that
un-wistful lingering;
who am I
to see myself alone?

The Most Beautiful Suicide, 1947

Photograph By Robert Wiles

She left her camel hair coat folded
with her grey purse, filled with make-up,
on the railing of the observatory deck.

She had thought, the night before,
fondly, of the despondent
river, the lonely canal

but to land atop a limousine,
flown down from one thousand feet,
eighty-six stories onto Fifth Avenue,

this is how the broken-hearted
bind their wounds. A grotesque
bier on crumpled sheet metal, her ankles

even, crossed, at rest. She had made up
her mind about woman's absurd search
for meaning, "It requires revolt."

A lady does not need
to be happy, imagining her heart
will be filled, when wed to a boulder.

Evelyn chose the fall, finally, freedom
independent of pedestrian happiness.

October 30th, 1938

Just before
a wasting war
a meteor comes closer.

Shaking bitters
into his
Manhattan,

his cheeks aglow
like a Jack-O-
Lantern,

Orson's engaged
to his radio
charade.

Outside, witches wait
on their broomsticks
in the West Windsor air,

the Jersey Devil
pants in the Pine
Barrens,

and Frankenstein
falls asleep
in L.A.

Meanwhile, Welles sits
in his high-rise booth
teething an ice cube,

teething a smile,
when he forgets
to say,

“Have you never
heard of Halloween
in America?,

When everybody
pretends
to see ghosts?”

Instead, there's an instant
of CBS silence,
then the whole of the world panics.

Lichtenstein Triptych

I. Black and White Head (A Bust), 1966

Time seems
frozen,
it's I who's cold.

Beauty re-
peated is tarred
with the abstract.

Brad, Roy,
whoever
it was who made

me 3-D,
cast and dotted
me gone,

let me stare
into the eyes
of other men.

I'll try to
see beyond
my ceramics.

Left boxed
in plexi-
glass,

to find some
romance in
fine, finished colors.

II. Whaam!, 1963

He was a pilot
that blazed through
the unbranded
tin can sky.

To his enemies,
a star,
aflame, to be
shredded and strewn.

He never heard
the thunder of his own
guns, the cold commands
of control,

all that was shot
headed toward him.
Now fragments,
black on white

and broken-winged,
heavenly junk
diminishing,
he'll go quiet,

but he'll go flash-
eyed, consumed.

III. Landscape with Philosopher, 1996

What can I do?
I've moved on
from poet to painter
to candlestick maker.

All three in one,
all three the great,
unnamed, untamed
ontologists.

As a poet, first,
I mined the landscape
with all the words
I learned to love.

As a painter
I learned to work
in silence, splash around
without a sound.

And now, I'm a knave
out of luck, a candle-
stick maker, flickering
orange on the outline

of a white cloud mountain.
Has any of the three of me
been enough
to make man stare?

"Spain Has no Foolish Dreams."

- Generalissimo Franco, 1938

Like a morning prayer,
another ass trips off the cliff.
Skin, butcher, and cook it,
Spain has no foolish dreams.

Mix with pig's blood
and a ripened pumpkin,
then thicken with flour,
Spain has no foolish dreams.

In a Land Without Bread
but with all Ten Commandments
making their own Sherry strong,
Spain has no foolish dreams.

The chauffeur has a shark's head
and the patron's draped in snails.
In hysteria normal,
Spain has no foolish dreams.

Though Dali tells the cabbie,
"To the outskirts of anarchy!
And I'll have a cheeseburger."
Spain has no foolish dreams.

When the Rolls Royce breaks down
A pure Spanish Horse runs free,
and drinks new wine at broken dawn.
Spain has no foolish dreams.

Mucus trails on the inside
of tradition's carnival, rotting
with an abandoned parade,
Spain has no foolish dreams.

While few are born
swaddled in piano strings
Still suckling the golden age,
Spain has no foolish dreams.

Superman

It's a field, it's a plane, it's No. 61 (Rust and Blue).

A fortress of solitude stacked into three colors
hanging in the hall with all the art gallery gods.
Man of Steel, with an origin story, a mythology,
but what about a man of rust, birthed into a blue

planet? A hazy meditation on the mortal life,
a twentieth century Jewish Russian-American
hero for the conflicted and doubting, framing

emptiness with more power than a locomotive,
able to build towers for the public masses unable
to take the leap, and only walk about the blocks
educing what it is to be human, blue and rusting.

Untitled (Television and Moon)

"When too perfect, lieber Gott böse."

-Nam June Paik

Bang all
of the keys

with the butt
of a candle,

with a video
camera,

with just
your forehead.

Smash the ancient
violin;

A solo
of sorts,

drag it through
the streets

scuffling about
on the ground,

string tied
to its scroll...

Just walk away
from

that miniature
thinker,

doesn't pay
us mind,

busy with his
small Sony.

We too are too
much like that —

all turned on
in the garden.

We too have
our own TVs-

The TV
cello

played by a
woman

with a working
T.V. bra,

a dysfunctional
robot

made from
old Samsungs,

But what would
Buddha think,

as he stares
at his

own sagging,
burnt idiot box?

Would he believe
us,

when we say
we want to be

the sublime
white line

too zen
for T.V.?

Don't Worry, The Worst has Already Happened

After *The Screaming Popes* Series By Francis Bacon

A splayed-open ribcage,
the pleated curtains hang
a purple, pulverizing, satin sheen
between bisected halves of a calf.

And why would we complain
about the clogging butcher's drain
under the robed throne
of an Innocent Pope?

With his wounded, shattered eye-
glasses face, his mouth glistening
agape, the colors of a Monet sun
rising towards the eruption of his head.

Aren't we all his lucky subjects
captured in the space-
frame of unprimed
canvas, beneath vertical brush-

strokes of a silent scream?
is this brutal distortion,
this accident of the oils,
this crippling self-effacement,

a product of a nervous
system conceiving life
as an injury? Reality as a cast
for a broken bone consciousness?

A man is an ape, three cubic feet
of bone and blood and meat,
who feels he is unhappy
and cannot be consoled or healed.

Lizard Music

It is said, home is where the golden
tortoise softly chews his lettuce.
Elsewhere is where the Iguana's purple inner-workings

spin on a spit for tourists just south of Bucerias.
Where later that night, in a jungle bungalow, a bored kid
in a white Lacoste, chugs grape soda and watches Godzilla.

And up in Harlem a lowly lizard blows on his alto sax
and the zoot suit staccato bounces off the brick,
weaves through the fire escapes like it's 1948.

Even Basquiat hears in his shredded loft,
responds with a mean clarinet, dreadlocks
crowned in a perfectly floating paint-dust halo.

The mouth with the quick-forking tongue
is capable of tasting the musty vintage
of the warehouses where art is made.

Joseph Cornell at a Diner, Late Winter 1966

In the shadow of the Unisphere, Joseph walked
into the boxcar diner and the kindhearted waitress

(whom he had a crush on) showed him to his booth,
saying that she'd be taking care of him today.

He ordered a piece of cake and a cup of coffee
and laid down what he'd found that day-

A shower curtain ring, a toy bike wheel, a Canadian penny,
"Could these make a movie, a memory, a photograph?"

Either way," he thought, "I'm turning circles into squares."
Hey, hey, Joe, hey, What Utopia have you made today?

That's how he had stored the chant and kept it
in his mind, since watching the news that morning, alone.

He'd been all through Lunar Park in his suburban body,
through the hectic, haptic city, but now it was time

to eat his cake. He took out his magnifying glass
and focused in on the square-cut sponge, porous and yellow.

Repetitions by the millions, tiny circles in this square alone!
He drank his coffee, tipped the waitress (her name was Joyce)

and asked for a box for his untouched cake.
He walked the long walk briskly passing under

all the honking viaducts, through the dirty slush,
back to his basement studio in Utopia Gardens.

Where, wrestling with scraps of wood, some even stuccoed,
he looked up to see one round quince bud in his backyard

tree through his ground level window,
"There I go again, squaring another circle."

It's Not Too Bad

I. A John Lennon Ballad

September, 1966 Almeria, Spain

It was hot as hell
but he was not
as popular as Jesus here.

It was dusk after another
day of filming, trying to see
how war could be comedy.

They joked with him, back
in London, that they needed
quick wit in a dry climate.

And the noir forties fan
spun slowly at the end
of his unmade single bed.

Then he took his mint tea,
pushed up his Windsors
and grabbed his Cadiz guitar.

Dreaming of salvation
army bands playing back
near home, he sang

languid and bittersweet
as the tape hissed, clicked
and rolled in his hotel room-

*"There's no one on
my wavelength, I mean,
it's either too high or too low..."*

II. A Migrant Worker Ballad

September, 2008 Almeria, Spain

He arrives here unmoored, but Moroccan, surprised
to see a desert orphaned for the sea of polythene.

On the bus from the embarcadero to the invanaderos,
he sees clusters of house-tents that stand in front
of the old Western cut-out towns that once stood in

for the real thing. *Nothing is real
and nothing to get hung about...*

He soon will wonder, “30 Euros a day...Is it enough
to take some back home?” He’d heard about a ‘Bread-
basket of Europe’, but all he’d seen was fruit under plastic.

Weeks later, another sweaty, pesticidal 18-hour day
ends as he slaps on one more shipment’s proper postage,

‘En ruta a Inglaterra’. *“Let me take you down
‘cause I’m going to Strawberry Fields...”*

Of Our Working Lives

I. The Ploughman

And I had heard about Japanese business-
men driving their cars off docks into the ocean
with their entire families buckled in, backseat victims

of a disobedient day- (markets trench)
dreaming (tends to find new lows).
But as things are likely to go east, fast,

a near dead dropout gets sent west,
welcomed by a Honolulu pineapple
production line that just needed an extra body.

II. Icarus

So it seems, the artist must wait for his sea
of applause, dependent on the donors
who can shade him from basking in the din.

And furthermore, a statue of a sacred cow
will never moo in Hindu, Urdu or Tulu, never
give milk to the starving, plow yams for the famished...

But, O! En-frescoed wall! Leaping Minoan bull!
Shit, you could gore a matador without industry
made-alreadys, paint-by-number schemes...

Let us paint the sky, the schooners, the mountains,
so the intensity of death will not
be the peak of our working lives.

George Bellows

Having chosen art
instead, he caught his boxing
when he could— some crude, red
meat being tenderized
in a seedy cyclone of fans.

Yes, he had chosen art-

the small, lost suit
centered in snowy tenements,
the wet, rat boy
cannon-balling beneath
the Brooklyn Bridge,

a place where, he said,

nature crashes into port,
where Billy Sunday hides
under his stadium seats,
and where there is never too much
blood left on the canvas.

The Repentant St. Peter

After Goya, El Greco

Peter's been a pig, knelt down
in the acorn dirt, fearing the copla
jonda of the stalking, right rooster.

The Old Master paints the saint
like he's a pickled pot of beans,
an ogre leaning on stone.

Resembling a prehistoric frog
dressed in the dusty clothes
of a campesino.

All the fleecy clouds sewed shut.
There was no longer afterglow
on the docks of Galilee.

For he had once hauled in redbellies,
learned to play on the shaking donkey
jawbone among angelic balladeers.

Now in these cedared woods,
he stood up to the reddening sky,
for one final, desperate prayer.

In tortured robes and woolen beard,
his forearms beamed above
to the one sun –shone throne,

surrounded by a halo of ivy
and the Greek's mercy, he wept,
"Te amo, te amo, te amo."

Re-Evaluation of 'The Lion's Bride' Scene

Male and Female (1919) Directed By Cecil B. De Mille

Gloria said, "His roar was like thousands
of vibrators all over you."

In her feathers and silver nightgown,
hot sex was at risk.

She lay in the cool of the set
in his open ashen limestone cage.

Their vows hadn't been exchanged,
but his meaty paws already

pressed down on her back
and the nape of her neck.

His hot breath made Gloria's
peach fuzz stand up.

She barely
made it out alive.

Hollywood heard and smirked
completely satisfied.

His skinny red tongue poked out
and sucked back in

he slithered under the lamplight
on his way up Vine.

The Re-Invention of Papier Collé

Fruit Dish and Glass, 1912

It all started with simultaneous perspective.
Braque and Picasso retreating to the Pyrenees.

The Spaniard told how he had learned to paint
ugly, even if it was young lady prostitutes
and the Frenchman said that he could now paint
bestly, turning an entire village into squares.

They shared a villa, but faced different sunsets.
They shared their work, but kept separate studios.

Then one summer morning at the breakfast table
Pablo put on an African Mask. Georges puffed his pipe.
Pablo danced around as Georges blew smoke
at the chipped fruit dish and both rushed back to work.

They cut up the wallpaper, cut down scrap wood.
They mounted an easel in the center of the kitchen.

Braque scrawled and shaded a bunch of grapes
and a lemon, a pear, and Picasso paced around
the still near-blank canvas and then charcoaled "BAR"
then "ALE" in block letters in two of the corners.

When they finished, the fragments were bizarre.
Gluey radicals pasting together in the Pyrenees.

Palma de Mallorca

Calculus can chart
the course of a free-
falling moon.

In these cosmic projections,
eclipses are shot down,
branches in reedy silvers.

Then, I'll ask, what is held
in the palm that stands
at the end of the mind?

Is it the nightingale clicking
across constellations, revealing
the Unknown to a Pair of Lovers?

Or is it the toucan who can
croak songs exotic through
its rainbow crescent bill?

Maybe it's a lark
laughing at yet another
artist in exile.

What is this space? This boomerang
moon, this hammocked moon,
these feathered palms occupy?

Paradise or the deep desire
to flee, la palma al fin
de la mente escapes me.

Pornographer's Thoughts

The first cup moistens my lips and throat.

The second shatters my loneliness...

The fifth lifts me to the realms of the unwinking gods.

-Unknown Buddhist Mystic, 7th century

It will begin
with a quiet,
little porn star
who will shoot off
soft obscenities
into another's ear.
Both immune to the scum
of love, they'll join
in the pure light of ceremony
on the set of my movie.

Then they'll wander
a roji-en together,
amidst the hanging lit
toros and the bamboo,
hopping along tobi ishis
under a matcha moon.
They'll head toward
the nijiriguchi and enter
inside, breathing evenly
in the tea room.

They'll smell tea flowers
and want to come back,
again and again and again.

“Sometimes you Gotta Say, ‘What the Fuck, Make your Move.’”

Risky Business (1983) Directed By Paul Brickman

After the 22nd and final take
socks all slick and shiny
from sliding on the flooring,

Tom slips on his Ray Bans.

As the crew crouches, packing up
their big cameras and turning
their aching backs to the set,

Tom sees his chance.

Still in his briefs and an Oxford,
he wraps one leg around the bureau,
flipping on the stereo with his teeth,

Tom starts to tongue all the volume knobs.

Reds spiking, hips thrusting,
spit running down the silvery
Sony-made metals,

it's champagne in an aqueduct
built towards the fading city
of rabid youth, unabated.

III. RHINOCEROTICA

After Mike Wallace's Interview with Salvador Dali, 1958

I.

"At the base of all my thoughts are cauliflowers and rhinoceros horns."

The logarithmic spiral is a type of perfection like chastity.

In these modern times symbols are powerful, and I am a genius.

And so I am as sexless, self-similar and ancient as a fern.

I see an inverted abyssal trench in every rhino's horn.

But I wear my diving helmet and walk on stilts.

See the rhino's horn comes to a tip so it must be erotic.

And it is made from keratin, which is in my hair and in my nails,

So when I look down at my hands I see the moon's reflections

And know God is tremendous and I can't hide and am afraid.

I am afraid of ocean liners and grasshoppers.

I am afraid of ocean liners because they are luxurious and decadent

But do not sink to the bottom of the ocean.

I am afraid of grasshoppers because, although they are marvelous,

They chirp sexually, imperfectly and in dissonant tonalities.

II.

"I adore three things: luxury, old age, and weakness."

Time is Camembert and angels are the cheese makers.

And because we are still in the atomic age these are anti-matter angels.

Our deaths will be bumpy, grey-skinned and beautiful.

Not erotic, but sublime, with the indulgence of feet swept off the ground.

See life is an ugly, horned striptease of blinding, binding libido.

I covered myself in evil –smelling fish paste and glued myself to my lover.

In my adolescence, I kicked a legless beggar and loved the monarchy.

Then I wanted to become the next Napoleon, but I grew up.

Then I wanted to become a woman cooking something freshly caught.

But I discovered I was allergic to all the shellfish in the ocean.

I am still surprised when I order a steak and a lobster

And am not served a cooked, black rotary telephone.

Clara (1741-1758)

I. As a Child Desired

Her invaluable mother was shot on a whim,
And so at 3 months, Clara ate from a gilded Dutch plate.
She was raised in the wealthy household of a seaman,
named Van de Meer, who thought it right to sail her
in the cargo hold with the cigars and the Assam Tea.

The Sailors fed her hay and IPAs,
smitten with her thick skin and almost-seduction:
she was a mermaid, a sexual substitute.
And the goats grazed around Clara's legs.
Mesmerized by the tropical rocking,
the heady smell of tobacco, and the salty fish oil
on her body, continually, all the way
from Calcutta to Rotterdam, Clara was
a one-horned, odd-toed ungulate in a 3rd-eyed trance.

II. As an Object Desired

Now on tour in a shock-less stagecoach,
only the Holy Roman theologians felt comfortable
with copies of her in saintly porcelain and alabaster,
fragile, just out of the kiln. The masses wanted to have her
and would have given her blackcurrants for all of her blisters.

The model for Durer's misrepresentation, (missing her dorsal
horn and her flowering jawbone) she showed the throngs
that she was a measure of leisure in the orangerie.
This German greenhouse is where she found love
in hands that fed her fallen citrus.
Her nostrils flared with the sweetness shown.
In a bronze cage, beneath the regal glazed-
roof, the Black Forest's snowy pines'
reflected back onto a rhinoceros under a cupola.

III. As a Subject Desired

She backtracked Hannibal's path through the Alps,
even though the price of her presence at Versailles was almost
too high for the Beloved King who needed company
for his camel, his pelicans, and his seals. And the powdered wigs
sauntered with elderflower liqueur and champagne in a coupe.

Then, that spring, she hit the fair in Paris.
The 'exotic gargantuan' even impressed the ladies.
And Casanova took note. Handing out the Rococo
trinkets and bracelets made from Macaw feathers
and wing bones, he hoped that some Madame would remember
the myth of Pasiphae. And he could be that backdoor man
hidden behind the cardboard cutout of a rhino.
And that's what Clara felt like, after a while,
without heft and unattuned to the arias of sensation.

IV. As a Curiosity Desired

Now weighed down with her sacks of money,
floating towards the mercurial Italian city-
states, while fighting off three pre-mature Lyonnais
obituaries, she trampled six men, suffering from sexual frustration.
Then, in the presence of the Pope, Clara shed her horn.

She entering Bologna in a carriage of Byzantine complexities,
drawn by twelve oxen, and residents forgot what she lacked.
No one supposed her soon in repose—catafalque
style—or thought of her death while masquerading
under decaying Venetian palazzos sinking in algae, sprayed
by the dank Adriatic. Volto masks turned pale and the Zannis'
long leather beaks bent as Clara lumbered across the piazza.
St. Mark's golden lion questioned his need for wings and lagoon.

V. As a Corpse Desired

“A true teenage unicorn”, *Gentleman’s Magazine* called her, years before she forded the English Channel. And those refined European minds did not fail to exert their imaginations when met with her demise. Although all she did was tongue trust onto her visitor’s faces, growling with good-humor,

Unbelievably and with no ceremony, Van de Meer just left her in London. He had considered, he said, the circus’s request- to stuff and to mount her, labeled ‘Double-Sized Jumbo’ cadaver, but instead he gave the body over to amateur scientists, who, dissected the massive cavity, removing all her organs, (velvety-wet boulders of tissue), and storing the rest away in museum dust, even stripping bare her academic flesh. In a pile of lost rhino bones, Clara was finally left alone.

Getting Bullied by a Future Olympic Swimmer

I learned to play hockey across the street from my house on an outdoor rink that froze over the tennis and basketball courts when it grew cold enough. In the summer, nets for two tennis courts were put up leaving a quarter of the green concrete for two hoops. Small pick up games would start, as people got tired of swimming in the crowded pool. Some ate nachos or candy and sat on the hot concrete on the parameter of the court, as others, usually a pair of boys, would challenge another pair to a “first to ten.”

One day my friend and I had had a particularly good run, and the information quickly got passed on to a pair of sophomores that wanted to defend their record of consecutive wins. There was an understanding that the games were played against other pairs of similar age, within a grade or two. We were sixth graders.

They had come from the pool shirtless, slim and muscular. One of them looked six feet tall. “Hey so what are we playing for?” the tall blonde one asked. “We don’t have that much, we got our lunches. I got a coke, pretzels, Twizzlers, a honey and peanut butter sandwich.” I looked to my friend, “Drew?” “Yea, me too, coke, candy, a sandwich.” “Wait” the tall one said. “Honey? You know your eating bee sperm, right? Ha-ha, this kid eats bee jizz and doesn’t even know it.” He looked to his sidekick, and both chuckled. “Wait? What’s that?” I wondered. “Are we playing or what?” Drew challenged. “Sure, If we win we take your food, if you win we leave you alone.”

We began the game and very quickly we could tell they didn’t play basketball and were just messing around, fouling us and playing keep away, as both could palm the ball and would bounce it off our heads. Sensing trouble, the small crowd left. I gave Drew the eye saying that we should forfeit and walk home. We began to walk off the courts toward the parking lot, when we heard, “Hey faggots, get back here!” Before I had realized, the tall one caught up to me. “We’re not done yet.” At this point my shoulders were grabbed from behind and his knee thrust into my tailbone. “You like it don’t you? That’s a rhino.” I turned in pain and stood in defiance. “Oh, not enough?” Then he grabbed my shoulders from the front and thrust his knee into my testicles. I fell and moaned. Both walked back to the pool. Drew who was faster than the other kid ran back to me from behind some bushes. He helped me up, “God, rhino-ed in the nuts. Sorry, man. Let’s go home.”

The tall blonde bully would grow up to medal six times in the Olympics and earn the nickname, “The Gentle Giant”, but that’s not how I remember him.

Puberty

After *James and the Giant Peach* By: Roald Dahl
(Novel: 1961, Film: 1996 Dir.- Henry Selick)

Every rhino,
the stupid beasts,
lives to eat
your parents.

They are dead and gone
in a jiffy, so now
you are alone
so now *you* turn to

being a nasty little beast
in a vast and desolate place.

So you go down
to the seaside,
a line of ink
beneath the rim of the sky,

groaning, crashing
moaning, about the grey
clouds as they charge
and you fall away,

to yell, "I am
not afraid of them!
Lumps of smoke
And noise!"

But really you are just a peach
against the Empire State
and everyone who becomes full-grown
must capitulate.

Two Endangered White Rhinoceroses Mate at the Indianapolis Zoo
Or YouTube Video: Rhino Porno

-A Found Poem

He's got it. That's penetration, baby, penetration!

O ... My... God!

There's gonna be a cumshot here in a minute...

He's got it in, I think, He got it in,
O My God! Holy Shit, they're mating!

I wonder if she'll get pregnant?

Probably. O My God!
He finally got it in, Holy Cow!

Look! They're even gruntin'. It's rhino porn.

Pssshhh, Shut up! O My God!
This totally made my day.

You've got this on video now, right?

Yea. I'm gettin' this on video,
I'm gettin' it.

Wow! Naw, he's gettin' it, he ain't tryin'
He's gettin' it.

I've never seen anything like this before.

Do they have the White Tigers, down there, in Cincinnati?

No, don't think so... No, honey.
Come down. Don't climb
up there. Not safe, honey.

Naw, don't get up there. Not safe, son.

Do they have the Jaguars, the Leopards?

See, they don't have them here.
They got Cheetahs here, but they got no Leopards or Jaguars.

I'm afraid to stop taping.
I have to press stop or pause or something.
Here, you come hold it. It can go up to five minutes.

They've been trying for awhile now
I'm just thinking, like, how heavy?

He ain't speedy is he? He's holding out.

She's patient. Haha.
How long does this process take, like, usually?

Wow! We'll be havin' some baby rhinos.

Oo, Oo, Oo, he's cum....

There he goes. I got him. I got him.

Tintin Kills Animals

Tintin In the Congo, 1930-1931

After shoving a rifle into a crocodile's mouth,
shooting antelopes into a bloody heap,
skinning a pesky ape to wear its hide,
blasting the head off the Witch Doctor's constrictor,
his orange coif still stood tall; Snowy barked approvingly,
And Tintin was ready for the larger animals.

The White Rhinoceros didn't like the mosquitoes
buzzing into his thick skin. (They were bullets)

The White Rhinoceros didn't know what to do
except be angry and dumb. (He had a 1 lb. brain)

Tintin hung from a tree and bored a hole
into the White Rhinoceros' thick hide
with a manual hand crank screwdriver,
(The handle carved from the horn of another White Rhino)
and then placed a single stick of dynamite
into the cavity of the armored animal.

The White Rhinoceros didn't feel a thing.
"I think the charge was a bit too strong!"

Tintin lamented as smoke rose from deep
in the Rift Valley, Rhino bits littering the ground.

Only the horn remained wholly intact.
And Tintin didn't even take it along
when he went on in his high socks to hunt down a Buffalo.
Tintin has not put away childish things—
he's still killing animals in the African jungle
and Snowy's still safe and his orange coif still stands tall.

Animals

Bronx Zoo, New York, 1963 (Photograph by Garry Winogrand)

Look in-
to my
black eye.

A pen
outside
is still
enclosed.

And now
I am
de-horned.

Although
my thick
skin fur-
rows, I

will not
be shown
as scarred.

Am I
not an
ani-
mal and

a broth-
er? A
rhino?

What dark-
room must
we e-
merge from?

I am
a rhin-
O! I

am an-
imal!

Crepitation

In the beginning of 8th grade, the wrestling coach, a former All-Star Center for the legendary 1985 Chicago Bears, came up to my locker and told me I should stay after school for practice. I went to the gym after the bell rang, got in line, threw my backpack down, took off my shoes and got weighed on the rusty physician's scale- 157 pounds. "We got a big guy here." The coach said as my friends laughed. "You'll be in the 152 weight class. We'll see how you do."

I got the proper maroon lycra singlet, the matching headgear, the tube socks, and I shared the special wrestling shoes with my friend, even though his feet were much bigger than mine. The team practiced every day after school on the mats - how to shoot, how to takedown. And I was good. I won my first 6 matches. Then coach said, "I want you at at least 165. A class up. I'll give you two weeks." I told my parents and got to eat more Cheerios at breakfast and an extra serving of chicken at dinner.

I made weight the day of the match and as I found my seat in the gymnasium, someone poked my shoulder and then pointed to one of the visiting team's wrestlers in his light blue warm-up tracksuit. He looked maybe Samoan and had noticeable dark facial hair dotting his chin and upper lip. I was terrified. As we shook hands, standing in neutral position, the bell rang and as soon as I had heard a grunt from my opponent he had already shot behind me, locked my wrists together in front of me at my waist, picked me up and slammed me down on my right shoulder. I heard a snap and screamed.

My eyes opened to the horrified bleachers, full of parents and friends and I even saw, standing to the side, the concerned assistant principal. I didn't try to sit up, but felt an unbearable grinding sensation in my collarbone when I breathed. The assistant principal, Ms. —, kneeled down next to me and ran her hands through my hair, "It'll be okay. It'll be okay. Just don't move or it'll poke through."

The stretcher finally came and my coach said I was a fierce competitor as he tapped me on my knee and the ambulance rushed to the hospital. The doctor would explain that there is nothing anyone can do to heal a broken clavicle. Just a sling and time.

Years later, after my collarbone had healed into an overlapping Z-shape, my friend and I were reminiscing about our childhood injuries and he brought up that day of the match. He told me that during the minutes while I lay on the mat, waiting for the ambulance, I had had a massive erection. I laughed and laughed in disbelief, but after he stopped laughing he said he was completely serious. And even now it hurts to sleep on that shoulder, and I can tell when it's going to rain.

Abada (1571-1588)

“Will the rhinoceros be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib?”

- Job 39:9

I. Iberia

An Indian viceroy's gift to os reis,
the Iberian Unicorn now existed.
Thought to be a serious threat,
Her horn was cut down, repeatedly.

When she made her second move,
from Lisbon across to Madrid,
she rubbed her horn down to a nub-
stereotypy in another new menagerie.

And with her new pale, prudent king,
Phillip, played a trick on the hermit monks.
Left her to graze in the monastery courtyard
she rammed the buttresses, interrupting
devotion with the royal incantation,
“What do you believe in now?”

II. The Ancient Myths

She was never Leviathan on a leash,
a Behemoth tagged with a nose ring.

Abada easily maimed the elephants,
killed all the lions in the coliseum.

She knew when and how to come stomp
fires out, with or without the cool of monsoon.

Still, she was never buried, like a cat,
in a pyramid erected just for pets.

In the end, she was blinded with ash
And drowned in a shallow shipwreck.

NOTES

1. “The Salad Spinner” ends with lines similar to Robert Bly’s poem, “Ready to Sleep” (Don’t be afraid/The great lettuce of the world/Is all around us.)
2. “Fragment on the Subway” ends with lines similar to the final lines of Raymond Carver’s poem, “Late Fragment”. The poem is also inscribed on his tombstone.
3. In “Revisiting 72nd St., June” the italicized sentence is quoted from a letter Federico Garcia Lorca sent to a friend.
4. For “A Man’s Ballad for Thymos”– Thymos, expresses the Greek concept of “Spiritedness” and is defined by Plato in *The Republic* as the area of the soul where feelings of passion, pride, indignation, and shame are located. Often associated with ‘manliness’ and will to power.
5. For “Old Vero Man’s Sharp Hunger”– “The Vero Beach Mammoth Bone dates from 11,000-15,000 B.C.E. and is the earliest known art in the Western Hemisphere.” Quotation from National Geographic News, 6/22/11
6. The quotation in “October 30th, 1938” is actually attributed to H.G. Wells when he and Orson Welles were both interviewed 2 years after the War of the Worlds broadcast.
7. In “Untitled (Television and Moon)” the epigraph, fully in English, states, “When too perfect, God gets angry.”
8. “Palma de Mallorca” is after Joan Miro’s *Constellations* (1939-1941) and Wallace Stevens’ poem “Of Mere Being” (1954)

BIOGRAPHY

Austin Sanchez-Moran earned his Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy at Gettysburg College in 2011. He has worked at a number of Museums and Historical Sites in Massachusetts and Washington, D.C. He received his Master of Fine Arts in 2015 from George Mason University.