

featuring

Stephen Ratcliffe

Brian Strang

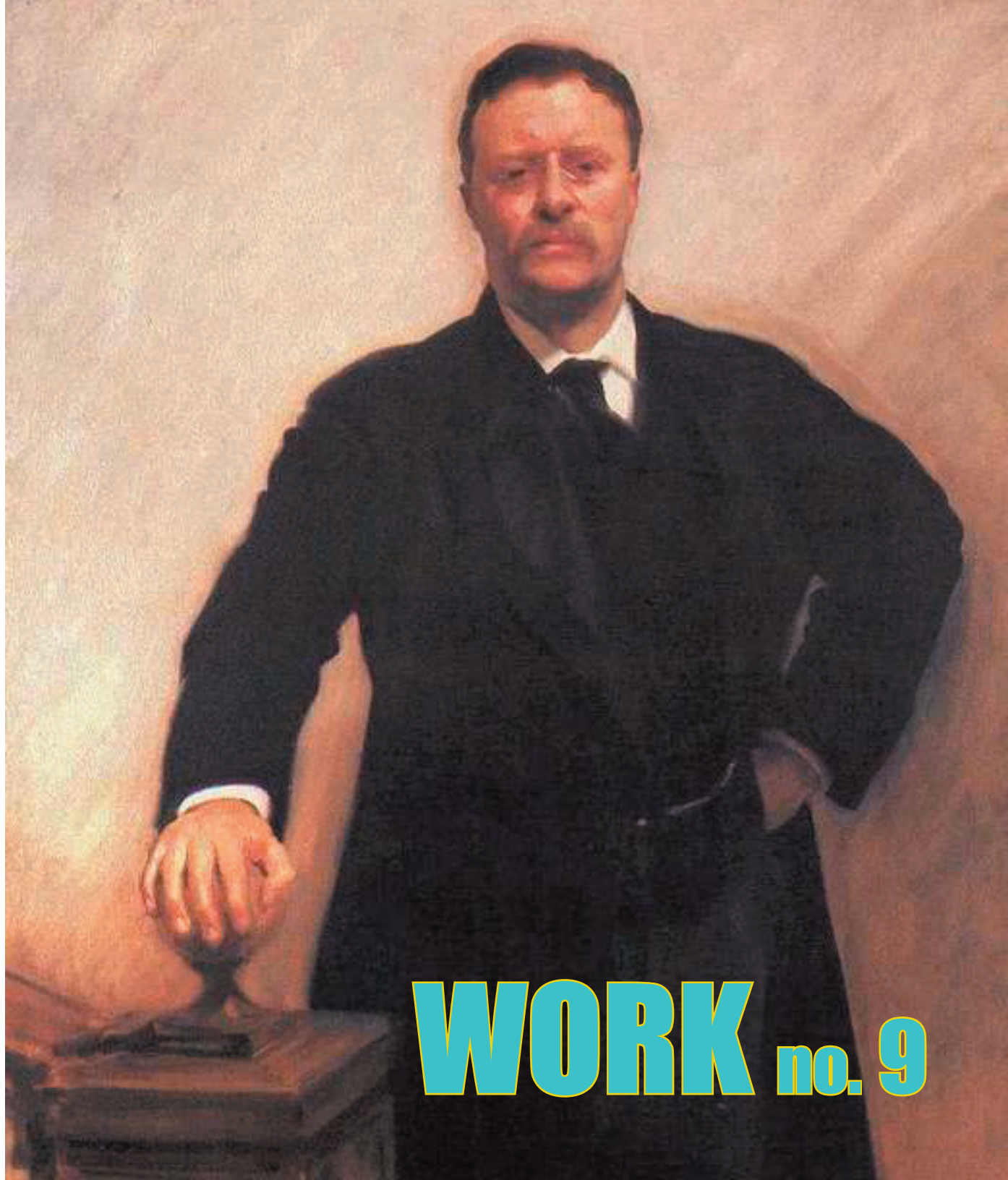
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WORK no. 9

Stephen Ratcliffe

6.1

circular orange flower against sunlit green passion vine-covered fence in left foreground, vertical plane of ridge above it, cloudless blue-white sky overhead

man on right

noting "we live in a place of planes and corridors, you turn the corner and look up to see to the Chrysler Building"

man

in blue tee-shirt telling woman on phone it's time to go cut the grass, "by which I don't mean 'lawn,'" some of it being over 6 feet tall

silver sunlight flickering across blue-

green plane of wave in the right foreground, white line of jet's trail slanting across pale blue sky above it

6.2

hummingbird perched on dried hemlock stalk slanting across left foreground, sunlit green plane of the ridge behind it, sound of jet passing overhead

man on the radio recalling

Paul Robeson's 1949 performance of "Old Man River" in Moscow, Tony Bennett's version with a conga drummer at Carnegie Hall

Roy Orbison at the Coconut Grove a few months before he died singing "it's hard to understand but the touch of your hand can start me crying, crying, crying"

film of blue-white

haze behind circular green pine on tip of point in right corner, white lines of waves moving in across below it

6.3

blue-whiteness of sky in window opposite the unmade yellow
and blue bed, hummingbird stopped at tobacco plant flower
in window above it, crow calling in right corner

woman

on right claiming "you've been watching too many movies,
you don't have to roll your thumb when you make a print"

man

in black and white checked shirt recalling interview with a 99
year old German organist, who had once played for the silent
movies, thought the key to his success was he didn't think

tern circling through blue-white haze above point, white
water moving across blue-green plane toward GROIN sign

6.4

red finch perched on curved copper bar above feeder in right
foreground, upturned curve of pine branch against grey-white
sky above it, sound of waves in the channel

man on radio

asking Bob Hope the secret of his old age, Hope claiming
"I bathe in Oil of Olay each night"

Stein explaining

in Wars I Have Seen "it is true and not real and real
and not true," admitting that "it took us some weeks
to get over it, but we finally did"

tern circling

into grey-white sky in right foreground, cormorant
flapping over grey-green plane toward the channel

6.5

red-winged blackbird flapping up from table in right foreground, finch perched on dried hemlock stalk across from it, grey-white sky overhead

woman on phone recalling

Hollywood films in Fremont, "enchantment of song and dance and colors and the love triangle that motivates the genre"

man in a black jacket standing behind two women in white, one on left leaning on horizontal green railing, darker green of parasol slanting across front of other

line

of four pelicans gliding toward point in right corner, white wave breaking across grey-green plane below it

6.6

circular pink-white rose below goldfinch perched on feeder in right foreground, yellow of scotch broom against plane of ridge, sound of jet passing overhead

Morton Feldman

sensing "there was something in the wistful wistfulness of things not lasting, of impermanence"

boy in school

play claiming "he never had so sweet a changeling," boy at upstage left noting "thus have I Wall my part discharged so, and being done thus Wall away doth go"

grey-whiteness

of sky reflected in the nearly motionless grey-green plane below point, line of white water moving in across channel

6.7

angle of oak branch slanting across grey whiteness of sky
in upper right foreground, copper light above back porch
door opposite it, sound of cars in street

Terry Riley

sitting at Korg keyboards, singing "there comes a time
when I must walk the line down that old Baghdad Highway"

woman on radio wondering about use of word "nigger," man
noting that black people will turn any tragedy into a term
of endearment, adding "hip hop is here today and gone today"

grey-white sky behind circular green pine on point, line
of white water below triangular tip of the GROIN sign

6.8

two birds flapping across motionless grey plane in lower
left corner, blue gate at top of stairs across from it,
sound of white water breaking across rocks

Feldman

recalling writing The King of Denmark on south shore
of Long Island, "just sitting comfortably on the beach"

woman on left noting Stan Brakhage note on envelope, one
picture of a "lone figure climbing into his boat," another
of "the tribe righting the Long Boat"

line of grey-white

fog slanting across point in right foreground, cormorant
flapping over the windswept blue-green plane toward it

6.9

cypress branch slanting to the right across grey-whiteness
of sky in left corner, wave breaking on grey plane below it,
14 cormorants flapping to the left across it

Winslow Homer

claiming "in the future I will live by my watercolors," Bill
Gates buying Lost on the Grand Banks for \$30 million

woman

on left remembering driving into Empty Quarter on deflated
tires, adding "camels can walk 100 miles in a day, drink
27 gallons of water in 10 minutes"

grey plane of sky

tilting toward tree-lined point in left corner, white
water breaking across grey-green plane in foreground

6.10

angle of blue railing slanting toward blue gate at the top
of the stairs, flat grey plane in lower right foreground,
lighter grey-white plane of sky tilting down toward it

man on left recalling "my mother came from a wealthy
family," worked in a kitchen during the Depression

woman across table noting she saw the Pope in 1963,
women selling trinkets outside cathedral, who said
"they'll be blessed even if they're in your pockets"

grey-

whiteness of sky reflected in the grey-green plane below it,
wingspan of pelican flapping across from upper right corner

Brian Strang

automatic

stand in a sector
of the new environment
where dawn gives way
to deafening snow on
the broad avenue

where a pencil-wristed
sadist with hundreds of
wives says people expect
too much for love
but keep your wishes

in obligation to science
and wanting no opinions
you attend secret meetings
escorted by soul sick men
to where dread converges

top of the food chain
where fear is five-fingered
desire what you want
and come to conclusions
before a walk that is not

waking but flying without
voices or senses a sentence
formed saying you are my
only ones you are only
my country my love for

the world and to bring
forth the world images of
imagining seep and hiss
tapestry of heights where
wraiths send greetings

an automatic world
closing down controls
backed down to manual
you are systematic lost
everywhere at once

what is mysterious
is not concealed but
so much more than
imagined yet imagine
you must try and fail

in depths of now
glass rain returns a
receding age foregone
conclusions life tapers
away in plain sight

dissolves intellect
accretes silver petals
coats the eyes sinks
to live under a surface
decline to sand beach

stone and hand and
bone worn with wind
wormed under water
in waves where lions
come up for a view

some other life could
have been yours touch
against your sleeve in
a crowd of crowns see
the double you feared

run after the figure who
recedes into dawn orbits
to a chameleon crowd
in earth detachable
hands nurse wounds

smell the scent of your
own skin alive walking
away with the self aware
gait of a ceremonial
leopard at a shrine

admittance

begrudged bird becomes ever athirst
a thrice-blackened star or eyeless pool
of cratered code a thin blue waste on
a hand where one's two tongues took
you to sorrow where a molten mouth
pays a mind to signs softens the blow
the hole within a hole where you look
for more and see an eye within a sun
and close the thousand wheels alike
a silt of estranged seconds sifted and
siphoned from the hours in the night
where you choose to stand to land on
a shore that sheds a light and lingers
a boxed crossword of logos berating
the broken rattan of consciousness to
leave a seam of white night presiding
in a circle of superimposed heartbeat

directions 1

The light is grey is mule is sepia. It hangs over the town, the collection of services in the wide valley. No totalizing fear, no seeming end, but there is an uneasy quiet lying beneath the roar of the highway. Signs are knocked out to their fluorescent teeth.

The light is pomegranate is shadow is steel. It holds the cypresses in its embrace, illuminates the tops of the kelp forest. Minerals bubble to the surface. A group of walkers on a cliff signals to the horizon.

The light is pine is black pool is filtered dust. It ends early in the river, in the dry air of altitude and yields to the animals that live in its lack, the mountain lion, marten and bear. There is a fear of fire and the balance of prey. The trees, precarious totems of history, signal thousands of years and the burn to come.

directions 2

The light is olive, is stone is smoked. It settles on the houses, the fields, the chestnut trees. People walk in organic patterns, slow the minutes to hours to days to years. Each village is rooted in its geography, sunken into the land itself. Signs are superfluous.

The light is white is heat is vision. It beats the inhabitants and bleaches their bones, eats the tops from their hovels. The world is constructed against it. The signs are ancient stones, placed here in a circle.

The light is clear is aqua is bottomless. It is thick and sensual and the people move against it in starts and stops. The muscles loosen and give way. The light itself is the sign and it floats on the ocean in a silver sun.

directions 3

The light is sea foam is white is blue. It envelopes the grasses, dunes and shore, the community of crows, deer and ticks. There is calm and the hissing of waves on the shore. Signs are rinsed away with each tide.

The light is iron is subterranean is fluorescent. It is emitted through an electrical sun, through wires and passageways. The image of fear is repeated in millions of variations. The inhabitants tread new ground every day. Signs are implanted and empty themselves every minute.

The light is a green stalk is an asphalt ribbon is water and mud. It coaxes seedlings and holds a circle of birds aloft. Here there is a wandering dread, a ghost with burning eyes. Signs are deep and worn, bloodied with the hands of war.

invisible sun (stage directions)

A handful of jawbones, orphaned and ordinary. Confidence games coincide, shorten the head, concede on contact. Algorithmic heartbeat. Drive tongues into light drive the human beating itself into iron. The suction of certainty drifts complacent.



The unspeakable permeates, thickens the air, a nightblack court of ambitions. Defendants in silver, alchemic turn of the petal. Dust filters through floorboards and a singer is squalid in an orchid nest, a provincial prison. Disaffected and dissected, living miniature lives, encircled. In a lake of lights and likes, similar souls burn the sphere. Constructs that hold them go supernova.

Do you not believe?



Surround the source with the tremor of a bell. To those living carefully, you may now add another reverberation— encapsulated exoskeleton in eternal amber light.

They throw themselves down the leaves and into a funnel for the nectared mouth. Under the sun's embryo.

Catherine Meng

(The Radio Bush)

The radio bush isn't really a radio
it's a shrub full of many grains

no, a show of hands & the hands are voices
all showing at once. His grimace

is a voice too although he's losing his
he writes like a lefty with his right hand.

Weeks go by. Fathers die.
Above the city you'd never know

the radio bush keeps tuning in
to the same slamming channel.

It wavers & makes a thoughtless blight
of the view. Even the temperature

becomes a misdemeanor
meaning to do no harm.

The radio bush is this same flock of specks
blocking the sky like a trident

making a wriggle above the shack.
The blue & the scrub jays squabble

over ownership of the ledge
thus beginning the jay wars

which will color many a jay's lifetime.
I drop my handkerchief from the rafters

anticipating a flurry,
a signal that indeed the radio bush –

will flicker in a draft.

In a fortnight my armies begin their homeward ache.
The city takes on the swaths of mirage.

Lily are 3. Iris are 9.
The radio bush is unsure

birds have 2 wings.
A clutch of eggs is ___.

Pine needles are 3 or 5. Spell red or white.
2 hump back whales are trapped in the bay

wounded by boat propellers.
Specialists are playing whale songs

saying "there is food here" at the mouth of the ocean.
From land they are playing "negative songs".

Season 2 Episode 3

Orientation: The map is not of land but of people who are missing someone gone missing. It is a map

of radio waves. No deer visit today, just flies, wicked thoughts of glory & other personal fripperies.

Orientation: To speak of these particulars means a flashback is beginning in some future head.

And then there is the scene where he asks her what guilt is & she exhales, throws her hair & asks him to dance

& he can't. Orientation: We always see ourselves in others more noble than we & sometimes we are involved in things

without great care. Maybe scurvy is only loneliness. Maybe this wish to tame something as green & multi-fronded as a jungle

is we the unoriented, roving. No deer visit today. At this outpost, time has been choked so it runs a decade behind itself.

Orientation: When equal distance from both commerce & university all the parking is free. Orientation: In March another clutch

of martyrs will be born. They hold opera to the wombs. Orientation: It is not as spooky as it looks.

Orientation: If you are reading this and your name is Kristin I know you sold the book she signed for you. Orientation: No one

can prick the chart like I do; make it buck & cause a thunder Orientation: The dog stands in for the man I am becoming.

Orientation: The dog stands alone. Orientation: Pray that we crash. Then can we call ourselves survivors.

Season 2 Episode 22

If you are a friend of mine

suppose we meet again up there in the cottonwoods

in a million years or so

for the price of a latte we could

meet again up there in the cottonwoods
in a million years or so.

I am the thing that causes cowardice. I sing.

You only get one survival story
but there are replacements for every misstep.

And we have stockpiled fodder for stockpiling's sake.
Because we can.

Full-boar ahead
we have fodder for numerous tracks not taken.

Mostly we say basic things in the approved language
but we use big words & when the elders look confused

we water-that-shit-down.
Same fabric different pattern.

He Ganeshed the doorway where death loitered

& lit small flames
that floated in shots of water

all around the entrance to that particular kind of loneliness
that is grisly in a police report but just plain lonely

when you know the person.
Wolverines extinct like you think they are

because I'm writing this poem with everyone dead
riding around in the backseat of my car.

Jack Morgan

The Haunting of NinjaTown

Hello,

To those of you who do not believe in ghosts:
you have not stayed up late enough.
I will try not to hold it against you.

**T
H
E
M**

Don't forget how explosive ants can be.
Don't think they can't do damage
just because they're small.

I, personally, have had ants lick up all my syrup
just to spit it in my face.
One scratched my lips off
for just one sticky kiss.

I've heard stories of ants driving cars
into living rooms and themselves into frenzies
setting blazes in backyards
of photos and letters
just to go on living.

A horror horde of crawl-and-crush giants.

No. 1 Woman

In a recent performance, she was much thinner than she should
have been.

She was so skinny that I thought she was perfect for you.
She's a filthy drunk just like you.

I wrote this for you when I was on the toilet thinking about women
who are perfect for you.

I hear there are billions of drunks right up your alley.

With the axis powers vying to assert their might,
you might have had a chance to find an ally.
She would have drunk you under the table.

I don't want to pass out on you,
but I have to tell you
there has never been a better time.

The Perfect Night

There are many reasons
why the owl blinks slowly

to wash them takes time
a goodnight rainstorm
yellow snapdragon fields
to wet them takes time

a hot breath
a hiss of sliding silk
will ruin the perfection of night

when you're alone
the longer your eyes are closed, the longer
you're all right

It's hard to forgive people
like you who refuse to acknowledge the simple
truth.

T H E M

The older an ant gets,
the better she follows the rules.
The young don't know what they're doing,
and they have a bad work ethic.
An older ant knows the tricks that work.
She doesn't abandon creativity & experimentation
for established traditions,
but she understands
the importance of the tried and true.

She still likes her hair tussled now and then.
She still likes being kissed in the dark on the forehead.

Ghost Machine

As soon as I gave up the ghost
on developing a time machine,
I started work on developing
the ghost machine.

When you pull my lever
ectoplasm covers you.
It isn't pretty,
but you get to see the best
of those who've come before.

You die a little
with every use,
but the benefits,
when compared with
simple time travel,
are apparent
:

the mechanics of small deaths
are easier to manage
than minutes and seconds.

No Khaki
nor corky bwana hats.
They dream of one day
playing elephant polo.

Now is the time to find a skinny bitch
and drink her under the table,
telling her bits of hodge podge like it was the world'
s best thing since sliced rye.