

# POETRY



*Pink Panther*, Markus Hartel, 2008

**from  
YOUR COUNTRY  
IS GREAT (H-N)**

Ara Shirinyan

**Haiti Is Great**

**Please let me know something.**

**Windows on Haiti is  
great way of  
keeping in touch with our  
culture.**

**The need in Haiti is great  
and I  
wholeheartedly recommend this  
ministry to  
everyone who has a  
desire to spread the  
Word of God  
and the  
love of God**

**your love of Haiti is great enough to  
incite you to spend  
“7 years of  
back-breaking efforts” to  
educate  
Japanese people about the**

**faraway people of  
Haiti  
and their culture,  
their History,  
their music,  
their politics,  
their aspirations**

**The fact that you're  
helping people in Haiti  
is great, but  
it has nothing to do with  
religion,  
you're just being a  
good  
person.**

*Wag's Revue*  
**Iceland Is Great**

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**The quality of birdwatching  
in Iceland  
is great because of the  
high density of birds  
and how easily observed  
they are.**

**There are good reasons why  
Iceland is great for  
photographers: -  
Great variety in  
scenery –  
Relatively short  
distances –  
24 hour daylight in  
summer**

**Iceland is great!  
It is a uniquely stylish place, for  
such a small  
population,  
the amount of creativity,  
the nightlife,  
is amazing,  
and so is the  
landscape,**

**Iceland is great to escape the  
fast  
capitalist  
life  
styles**

**we  
tend to lead.**

**The main reason we visited Iceland was for the  
photography.**

**Iceland is great!  
You have over two hours of  
twilight,  
the magical time for  
photographers.**

**Iceland is great,  
the nature is stunning and  
Reykjavik is a  
nice little town  
(Even has a  
small  
domestic airport  
in the  
city center).**

**The winter in Iceland is great for  
exploring the dancing  
Northern  
Lights,  
the natural wonders surrounding the  
city  
in their  
gracious winter  
coats,**

**Iceland is great for its  
natural beauty of  
mother**

nature.

I've never been but  
I've been told Iceland is great for  
photography.

Iceland is great for  
pastel colours

I must agree with the others that  
Iceland is great  
but  
expensive.

I'm sure Iceland is great.

Well,  
aside from the  
tiny population and  
everyone being  
everyone else's  
uncle...  
But that doesn't matter to  
visitors.

*Wag's Revue*  
**Ireland Is Great**

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**ireland is great  
twenty five years ago,  
ireland was the  
poorest nation  
in western europe.  
today it is the  
wealthiest. :)**

**East of Ireland is  
Great Britain.  
France lies to the  
south,  
and the Atlantic Ocean  
surrounds the west,  
southwest,  
and  
northern  
coasts.**

**I think the music culture in  
Northern Ireland  
is great,  
whether you are looking for traditional  
or modern.”**

**Ireland is great!  
The nonsmoking pubs in the Republic  
are so much fun.  
I could barely see my drink in the  
Belfast pubs  
though.**

**A book about  
pushing a fridge around Ireland  
is great.**

**“Ministering in Ireland is great because  
people already have some  
basic knowledge of God**

**Sometimes Ireland is great,  
when you're in the mood to  
run some errands and  
have a  
friendly chat.**

**when I'm not listening to music  
you'll probably find me  
hill walking,  
treking and climbing,  
Ireland is great for  
that kind of  
stuff!**

**A general slam of Ireland is  
no more useful than someone saying  
Ireland is great  
without giving  
some real reasons why  
they feel that way.**

**“Ireland is great and  
going through  
growing  
pains,**

**but  
the real reason they are  
booming is  
subsidies  
from the  
EU,  
lets be  
realistic.**

## Isle of Man Is Great

He is of opinion, that  
smuggling of salt out of the  
Isle of Man is  
great.

the potential for systematic  
marine  
archaeological studies  
in the Isle of Man  
is great.

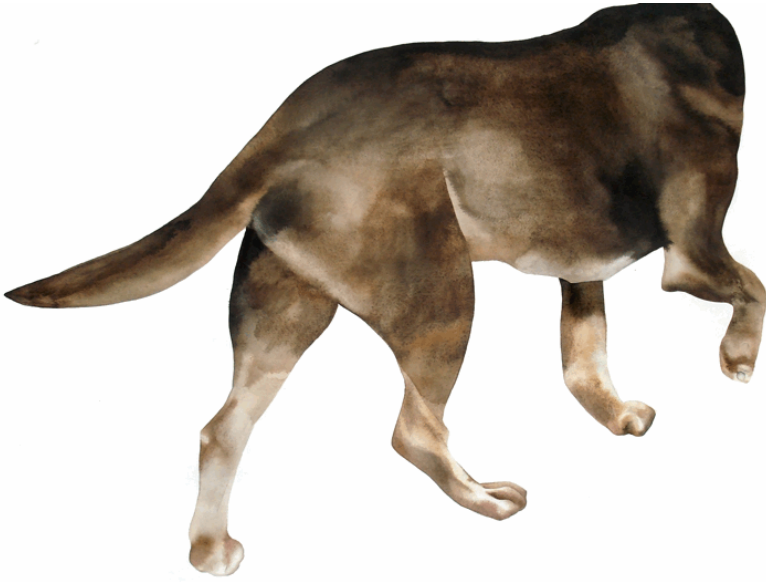
Also,  
Isle of Man is great for  
session-public transport  
cross- pollination.

The Isle of Man is great.  
You'll have to come and visit us.  
We llve in a  
tiny, damp,  
rot-infested house,  
but  
it's detached !

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# THE DOGS OF CHELSEA

Mathias Svalina



1.

**I cut my first dog in half to find out what was hidden. My second dog was a wristbone I'd hidden below the bed. After that there was a series of dogs, each one jumping its fences or digging its way out of nightmares. In the kitchen the dog's claws rattle the linoleum.**

2.

**These dogs too, came from overseas. Double the dose of the painkiller. Hand a manual of suffering to each passer-by with plastic eyes. Look directly into the camera lens for the entire day. It is vermin & it carries disease, yet I cannot help my sympathy.**

3.

Tyranny is new, but it is your best friend. It is the tyranny of breeding. The chalk marks on the street, like glass buildings in their winking, intend to humiliate. It is the tyranny of diamonds & crusts. The tyranny of the fathers & all the other neighbors. It is the flapping piece of paper stuck below the wiper of the shiny Mercedes Benz.

4.

A dog must be killed, singed, cooked & eaten as a sacrifice or the coins will return into metal. A dog must be killed by decapitation in order to extract the proper returns on investment. This is the advice you receive from the manual. This is real fur I feel beneath my fingers. When my father put the dog's head back onto the dog he stopped coughing up the blood & was cured.

5.

I see a headless dog enter a room & sit down patiently. and then I see its tail walk into the room like a grotesque inchworm. It was the best Halloween costume I'd ever seen. It told me everything I needed to know about urbanity & cinema. I am old now & nearly at my end. Here is my camera—you must do the filming. Here are the bones that lead to my heart.

6.

Dogs dream of human bones. Dogs dream of human bones that walk with hunched & twisted backs. Do you choose a dog or its master? It is the tyranny of context. The tyranny of red buildings, brown buildings, glass buildings, all reflected in the still pools of rainwater from which the pigeons sip.

7.

**We walk in circles around the dead dog because our stomachs are weak. We are wearing birchbark masks & betting sugar pound for pound against tin. The wolf gave the dog the right to snatch food from men. That is why wolves kill dogs in the streets.**

8.

**A dried up dog is kept in a box by the hero. When the hero is killed, his widow takes out the dog, which comes to life, collects the bones, howls over them, & the hero revives. The last dog I had became me & when it had me, it dreamt of my bones until I had bones.**

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# THE DOGS OF CHELSEA 2

Mathias Svalina



1.

**This dog is made of rain & coated in acrylic. Another metaphor is the stain that remains when the body washes away. I have named her Schatze, which is German for “understanding is part of the treatment.”**

2.

**This dog rose from the earth like the body ejecting a remnant of glass from the pad of the thumb. I lay the dog face down in the dirt & watch its parts creak loosely like an old wooden chair that has been sat upon by the same person for many decades while that person grew fatter & fatter. I have named her Schatze, German for “like a hospital.”**

3.

A dog always returns to the scene of its imminence, to the curled-up rug that it has bitten into being. A dog creates the owner by being trapped inside the house & when the food runs out the dog is no longer a dog, but an error of intention.

4.

The resale value of a dog depends on its original intent & the nature of its current conditioning. One dog can be larger, stronger & smarter than another dog, but the other dog can still be larger, stronger & smarter. My parents were both dogs of equal proportions, but when they died I became very small with a harrowing howl.

5.

This dog is made of truck exhaust & must step gingerly over the subway grates. It is suspended in the concept of complementariness, how the green leaves feel in relation to the strawberry's seeds. This dog is infested with millions of weevils & must continue running to sustain its shape. I have named her Schatze, which is German for "sweetheart."

6.

A dog's shape is everything to a dog, just as time is everything to a watch. A dog must be accepting of every possible framing. Near the burning building near the river. Near the statue tipped into the river.

7.

**A man without a dog is a man with his original paint job. A parent without a child is not like a child without a parent. The parent without a child must hold the railing when she or he walks up the stairs. For the child without a parent there are only stairs in the stairwell.**

8.

**This dog is beginning to rot. It has been dead for decades. I have named it Schatze, which is German for “what I could have believed in.” I have named it Schatze, which is German for “I will return to the house of my youth” or “I will not return to the house of my youth.”**

9.

**The statue tipped into the river continues to whimper & squirm. It remembers the stairwells of its youth with their blue carpets. It remembers the sounds the steps made creaking when a parent walked up them & the sound of soft thudding when a dog ran up them. These sounds remain when the body washes away.**

# COLOR THEORIES

Julia Alter

## Theory of Blue

Cobalt dream: cash glass.  
Anyone will buy a thing,  
put it down to rest.

My museum home,  
I'm jealous of the hurt one—  
silence in my bones.

Bruises were buttons  
for her, she pushed them harder  
than I thought she could.

*Let me sail away*  
on the beach by Lion's Head,  
that was Africa.

For me, the city  
only had one name, a boy's,  
and never again.

Sea Point, didn't know  
I'd hold it like a kitten  
with the meanest claws.

Cold and ancient light,  
so under-dressed in winter.  
It was summer there.

That skirt, torn before,  
ripped again in harmony.  
Kissed, an accident.

*Wag's Revue*  
**Theory of Green**

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**Something to touch on,  
making lists of baby names.  
Now he wants a garden.**

**Today, true autumn.  
Hard enough to get in touch—  
hard enough to touch.**

**Socks the same color,  
*to be lost in a forest*  
to be caught, a fish**

**landed in a purse.  
Scream, squirm and test the water.  
Slime, gills, no money.**

**I wake up a pea-  
cock, underneath this heavy  
memory of quills.**

*Wag's Revue*  
**Theory of Red**

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**Full of teeth, fighting  
dogs tear up floors. Bone shatters  
precise as a clock.**

**Once in Mexico,  
a dog in dust with three legs.  
I thought: *take him home.***

**I've learned the ugly  
things need saving least, beauty  
always more broken.**



**Easy denial,  
easily his excuse. He  
was home already,**

**facing her, who had  
found lipstick on a wine glass  
in the dishwasher.**

**Looking back, no hurt.  
That's why it all kept breaking.  
An earthquake, whispered.**

*Wag's Revue*  
**Theory of Yellow**

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**Drew a line today,  
suddenly butterflies float  
from the black ceiling.**

**Vast as memory  
or an elephant's tiptoe,  
swinging its tail—*swish*.**

**These are desert days:  
sun rock hard when it rises,  
curling shadow nights.**

**I make a fish from  
a lemon. There are trees for  
this, without water.**

**What could be brighter?  
I almost see a date palm.  
Miracle, mirage.**

*Wag's Revue* is proud to announce the winner of its 2009 Winter Contests in Poetry, ENGRAM WILKINSON. The simple appearance and directness of voice in his work is deceptive—Engram's poems have a remarkable dream-logic to them. His domestic scenes and observations on love, which border on precious or saccharine, then tumble into the imaginary of 'monsters' and 'conceived geometry' with the grace of a sleepwalking gymnast.

—Will Guzzardi  
Poetry Editor

## Neighbors

In the silence of love being made on the opposite side of our red brick wall I hold your hand: *Para ser libre es a menudo para estar solo*. We look together at a copy of *National Geographic*; there are images of wars and children. We close the magazine and look at each other. We both know the iconography of death has taken a new turn: when we kiss there is always a new fruit to slice. Tell me this isn't true, tell me that we'll grow up and be somebody's neighbors. Tell me that we'll be a monster; a faceless, noise-making monster that everyone will judge. I want to make noises. I want to peel oranges with my teeth, my hands to be covered in acrid citrus juice. You're looking at the table—you disagree.



## Invalid Geography

In my childhood I was raised in the Appalachian Mountains; I was taught how to work with a hunting knife, which is to say I always approach problems from below, working upwards. After sex, people are curious—we ask questions. I reply and ask my own question, *could you kill another human?* Tonight you're answering with silence; we have been fighting and there is no winner. Against your weary flesh I become a logician—If the sheet is an ocean then we can walk on water. If we can see the ocean we must be home. It does not follow that you are my house. You are pregnant, your body a sprawling, solitary mountain. In the small of your back I feel you shiver. *Cold should be connected to the ground.*



## Returning to Sender

You're a box, a cardboard box with edges dressed in scabs of masking tape and postage stickers. I cut into your flesh because I have been mailed a package. Inside I find a dozen white roses: someone somewhere is in love because the rose petals have been written on, each saying *I love*—they are unfinished, but the meaning is clear, spelled out in blue ink: someone forced you to eat flowers. I want to write back, want to carve into your flesh a series of postcards: *Do you know why I smoke? My first attempt at suicide failed. I like slow things. I must learn how to empathize.* The cardboard is callous and resists my efforts to be honest: I try to write a reply but my hand is shaking. I am left with no choice: I shower, place you in the passenger seat and drive to the post office. The postman places you onto the scales. He covers your eye with a stamp.



## Fake You

*When you see a body you see a history. – Louise Gluck*

On my ankle I have written an abecedarian sequence where A is “love” and you are B. I cannot show you my body: this is a major thoroughfare and there are simply too many people. After showering I wrote the poem on myself in permanent marker, my flesh eager to receive meaning. After your quiet leaving I sat at my table, watched the sunrise and conceived geometry, created new forms as a religion I could follow. It follows from the idea of the circle that there can exist four angles, our bisecting legs splayed out creating an invisible zero. Your arm cuts across my stomach—my stomach, not my chest—and you have made for my body a supplement. It tickles; I flail about. In the silence of passing people and their fragmentary conversations you reach out and there is the proof: if we occupy three dimensions then I am cubed, a form complete with edges.