

## Strange Attractors

LOUIS ARMAND is an artist and writer living in Prague. His work has appeared internationally. The first large scale solo exhibition of his paintings took place in 1999 at the underground Galerie Artnatur in downtown Prague, with sound installation by the Pazvuky Noise Project. Armand's reviews, critical essays, poetry, fiction and translations have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including *Sulfur*, *Meanjin*, *Frank*, *Poetry Review*, *Stand* and *The New Orleans Review*. In 1997 he received the Max Harris prize for poetry at the Penola Festival (Adelaide), and more recently he was awarded the Nassau Review prize, 2000 (New York). Armand is an editor of the comparative studies journal *Litteraria Pragensia*, a member of the editorial board of *Rhizomes: Studies in Cultural Knowledge*, and poetry editor of *The Prague Revue*. [www.louis-armand.com](http://www.louis-armand.com)

also by Louis Armand

### Books

*Land Partition* (Melbourne: Textbase, 2001)

*The Garden* (Cambridge: Salt Publishing, 2001)

*Inexorable Weather* (Todmorden: Arc Publications, 2001)

*Seances* (Prague: Twisted Spoon Press, 1998)

### Other publications

*Mimo Provoz* (Cambridge: Equipage, 2003)

*Technē* (Prague: Karolinum, 2003)

*Synopticon* with John Kinsella (Florida: Mudlark, 2000/2)

*Base Materialism* (New York: x-poezie, 2001)

*Anatomy Lessons* (New York: x-poezie, 1999)

*Erosions* (Sydney: Vagabond Press, 1999)

*The Viconian Paramour* (New York: x-poezie, 1998)

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LOUIS ARMAND



PUBLISHED BY SALT PUBLISHING  
PO Box 937, Great Wilbraham PDO, Cambridge CB1 5JX United Kingdom  
PO Box 202, Applecross, Western Australia 6153

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First published 2003

Printed and bound in the United Kingdom by Lightning Source

Typeset in Swift 9.5 / 13

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ISBN 1 876857 59 5 paperback

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1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

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## Acknowledgments

Versions of some of these poems have appeared in the following publications: *Big Bridge*, *Canary River Review*, *The Drunken Boat*, *Literary Review*, *Lungfull!*, *Moria*, *The New Orleans Review*, *Offcourse*, *Sidereality*, *Slope*, *Sulfur*, *Tinfoish*, *Tooth*, *Verse*, *Verve* (USA); *Semtext*, *The Prague Revue* (Czech Republic); *CCCP 11*, *Stand* (UK); *Metre* (Ireland); *Frank* (France); *The Plaza* (Japan); *Core*, *Jacket*, *Meanjin*, *Salt*, *Westerly* (Australia); and in *Boxes*, ed. D. J. Huppatz (Melbourne: Textbase, 2000).



the geometry lesson



## some heliotropes

conspicuous, in that it belonged there & must have arrived  
at the end of some itinerary—une pièce de résistance—in a park  
beside a fountain, the laughter of remote spires  
assembling to no good purpose (what they divulge is neither  
an explanation nor an inventory)—in a shaft  
of blue light their mouths corolla upwards, even  
the sun cannot go on breaking over new ground  
(indefinitely?)—a tract, spelled out in paragraphs & capitals  
the “solemnities” of each late harvest *stripped*  
*of the identity imposed upon it* (the breast

his mother refused him, carved from old fists) or deep down  
in the live culture, strange penicillins give form to a brief

& tender incest—a *single irrational symbol* whose features belie  
the uniform field—because of it—the same regimen of  
nothing to say, everything said: a brown  
paper bag in which he sought a way back, long ago (destination  
not indicated but sensed from things passed or seen  
*en route*)—the same impressions laid one upon another  
simultaneously the beginnings of long  
chains of thought & their ends—dividing each time

by a subtle integer we never remembered the key to, reluctantly  
stretching out a hand on the scarred river ice (to stave off  
another separation?)—the rest

is statistical, metaphor like target silhouettes, strung out in a sub-  
urb or desert (the high atlas, for example, or a housing  
project in x)—the outskirts redolent with pre-  
fabrication, *la pensée sauvage*, modular, resolving the inner  
primitive

in studied conjugations (i clench my teeth, it doesn't work  
no matter how hard), prompted by thoughts  
mostly of other places but sometimes not—or casting back to the  
undamaged wall & well-trodden path that lead up to it:

when the last stone fell, you had a hand in that also

## the geometry lesson

*it is in the same way theoretically understandable that mental illness may, in its own turn, be linked with some bodily accident*

these elucidations: “the world is still the vague theatre of all experience”— . . . scripting dislocation, an interminable middle, without beginning or end—playing & replaying a scenario of “strange interludes,” impedimenta (in which everything must be exposed to view)—this moment is crucial: the door is ajar, the cell no longer closes off—already the walls are only bars (or the distance from one of two intersecting lines to the other increases beyond all bounds as we recede from their common point)—approximations demand a plenum: “more room desire to winter”—a radius, to thicken it into a body—derived, by trial & error, its hard edges, a view into another interior (yet distant—as if blurred or in weather), invisible as letters printed far apart on a contour map, haunting its periphery—“continuation is reassuring”—a present & nameless concern who “unlacks” (the letter x, for instance, which is a variable, in a place somewhere else, on the last or next page, collapsed under the effort) . . . the old fears: however many messages we send (we’ll never get through)—channels, ridges, walls, tendons, bridges: something splayed, available for use—or a mouth gapes at one side of the stage, belabouring it—each figure divided ruinously in the outlying & remote space which is sometimes called the nave—a movement to foreclosure, idealised as an object or an *objectile* slipped through the vowel, onerously—  
“as i look up  
or it falls apart”

## incarnedine

“it is therefore the imagination that makes the reflection of the emotions

possible”—or someone calls in the middle of the night

& asks about the war & public opinion, although sooner or later everything becomes habit—the short-wave hissing in several languages at once

“autochthonous selves”—a clockface slumping in the heat

impossible to tell what time of year it is—looking down at the page with printed words & partially

impaired vision (the shadow of an aeroplane flying low over

water), something which could be an emblem, not of endurance but of congruence in flux—events currently taking place in x: he tries to think his eyes wide open, to say

in this sense reflection & extension are one *& the*

*same*, as slow-moving silhouettes

in a calibrated range of . . .

distance by time: to see the approach

in exact detail—citing

turbulence, agitation, intruding upon the calculated “loss of faith” & other derogations—it had to be spoken of though in words re-learned & re-forgotten—by presentiment, conscience separating the idea [of power?]

from its actual exercise in the world—which means: to go on

for as long as you can endure it

immunology, among other preventatives (“the principles of  
nature  
being the detour of human observation”)—a too-general  
anæsthesia, lessening the flow, slowed down, almost to a stop  
“for all  
intents & purposes”—or jamb  
the body deep into a hole (to repel ghosts) & speak of it only  
in the past tense

## dimensions variable

an ambiguous response: caution no longer  
the stone that will provoke him in his task

it was

*arranged*, somewhere  
[else], in winter (leaving  
the page cold

a shape like the sky suggesting “absent scenes  
& feelings / of severe

randomness”—the gap  
between x & y is widening, but

how to *precede*? i move to a place not  
far from here—the ever

invisible meanwhile: grasping one horn  
of the dilemma (the film is of a  
form of hygiene  
by other than visual means

bitter taste in the mouth, in silence, *speaking otherwise*—not  
to / sleep & forget

a phrase like “unleavened  
bread,” which is also a signpost: the road to  
emmaus—that leads us

on (zieht uns  
hinan), as goethe says—the demon  
of friday

recurring, incidental & con-  
tingent: “progress” is the only  
clue to this *tædium vitæ*

each piece  
falling / into place—given back, abandoned, over-  
taken—although  
no single answer presented itself

to plug the holes  
dwelt in, or surmised—the idea of a *cyrrhosis* (“i eat  
my own children”)—the po-faced bride

from strange envelopes arrived by flight, so long kept at bay  
the shadows, planted  
in the instruction  
                    manual—employed, even, to more practical ends

## psychology with nude & mondrian

a beginning always remembered differently—i step forward  
& i vanish, the white surface

devoid of all sentiment

there remains the progress from one point to another  
like hyphenation—some problem of density, cast-offs  
“why try to give the impression of a consistent &  
indivisible personality?”—

everything is too artificial &  
very real, not the sum of its parts, & nothing keeps still

the nervous reflex from synapse to eye  
compelling a recognition (“things the mind  
already knows”), the mask of an exhibited crime

or plus-&-minus abstractions of the sea at scheveningen—  
a grey undifferentiated sky & roof-

line with broken

chimneys

*like “stumps of teeth”*

*black gums*

the air tastes of salt, human flesh, aftertaste, lips & tongue  
(it stretches out into the water, a dark line  
anchoring it, keeping the drowned body in place)

the sound of running water persists through several nights,  
footfalls in the border passage:

a departure, an embarkation, an expedition—

the moorings are broken

& the tide pulls unrelentingly the body near as from afar  
a rumour

from some prenatal & anonymous night

that won't disappear, but spreads out “like a stain”

## monument to v. tatlin

to calculate the amount of oxygen in a given space—how it could be situated, attached, positioned, displayed—the lifecycle of such a personal appliance, something awkward, like a carelessly discarded shoe waiting to be tripped over—the inauspicious movement through air,

flung side-ways, hinged between collapse & flight—a succession of animated right-angles imitating a procedure: how could it be born of anything but precedent? some private recourse to first principles—a downfall of the last phrase, as “inner necessity”: something resembling

a noun & modifier, pitched in rapid succession (but what is measure when no one part is discrete from another?) the ever more removable “&” not *what* it spoke but *de-noted*, thrusting into it—sans gages / of the nearest next ground “c’est à vous de le trouver”

(to dispel the illusion of itself, on such & such a day, when x comes to take the place of y—*not without warning*—or a parenthesis is opened & through it passes “the disposable body”—a cause for / belief? &c—to write it down & then commemorate: here, if for no other reason than

to relish its non sequitur—or it went unnoticed (as they tried to tell the skein from the face): i’ll come back, there’s someone at the door—but who were you? a window is lighting up in the sleep of the trained mind—in the “prone” position, & however slight their

evidence—a gallery of ordinary things: street numbers, names (in & out of sight, at any time e.g. october, of that particular year)—the hollow, cut into frost, is a question of which birth full to its shores does not answer—counting backwards from the articles that belong to it, this seemingly