



ANNA OSTOYA J M Z

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CONTENTS

1-2:
HOW WE LOOK
by Ataina Claire Feldman
and Alexandra Tell

3-5:
THE BIG ALLEGORIES
by Moyra Davey

6-8:
THE PASSENGERS
by Mónica de la Torre

9-11:
WHERE WE'RE CALLING FROM
by Lamin Fofona

12-13:
WHAT WE DID
by Angie Keefer

14-20:
RETURN OF *THE BLUE CARROT*
by Mark von Schlegell

Back Cover:
Checklist of Works

HOW WE LOOK

Ataina Claire Feldman and Alexandra Tell

J M Z presents a series of paintings by Anna Ostoya, derived from sketches she made of passengers on the subway. With vivid colors and kaleidoscopic compositions, Ostoya creates portraits that are at once personal and removed, representational and surreal. Although elements of recognizable signifiers are present on the canvases—a baseball hat, a ponytail, a pair of glasses—these representations convey identity as a complex amalgam of contingent parts, more so than a coherent whole. Ostoya produces an intimacy with these strangers, drawing us into their interiority while allowing their identities to remain a mystery. Gone is the authority of conventional portraiture that claims to represent some truth of an individual. These fractured, dynamic compositions nullify our own ability, as viewers, to categorize her artistic subjects.

Ostoya began sketching people on the subway in 2008, when she first moved to New York City. As she commuted on the J, M, and Z lines from Bushwick, Brooklyn into Manhattan, the train passed through distinct neighborhoods and various ethnic enclaves. Struck by the diversity of characters on the train, Ostoya sketched to engage with her surroundings in a pre-smartphone era, though drawing was not her usual medium. A decade later, collaborating on a book with political philosopher Chantal Mouffe, Ostoya returned to these subway sketches, transforming them into digitally rendered collages using images from her personal archives.

For *J M Z*, Ostoya returned to these portraits once again, reproducing her digital collages in oil on canvas. She developed a method for painting her digital compositions (themselves composed of fragments of previously painted, printed, and found material), seeking to depict the depth, texture, and luminosity of the digital works on canvas—a cycle of recontextualizing and reanimating her own work. Ostoya collapses art historical movements from renaissance mannerism to abstraction and contemporary photojournalism. One might see elements of Artemisia Gentileschi's *Judith Slaying Holofernes*, 1613, Piet Mondrian's *New York City I*, 1942, historical photographs of political figures and avant-garde artists, financial graphs from newspapers, and the American flag—all of which have in some form appeared in Ostoya's previous works. Through this process, Ostoya resists obstinacy in her own ideas as well as

historically cemented artistic traditions. In many ways, her painterly process demonstrates the political tenor of this series: an openness towards reinterpretation.

Mouffe's 2002 essay *Politics and Passions* (the namesake and featured essay in Mouffe and Ostoya's 2021 collaborative publication) presciently warns that the centrist ideal of political consensus poses a threat to a healthy democracy. While neoliberalism desires a placid hegemony ("the end of history"), democracy actually flourishes when there is texture of thought and openness to disagreement (agonism, in Mouffe's terms). Mouffe suggests that the liberal tendency to equate politics with morality creates enemies out of those who disagree, which would open the door to a rise in right-wing populism. Ostoya's multifaceted portraits of individuals, all of whom occupy the shared public space of the subway, contend with these fundamental political dimensions of identity and democracy: the individual and the collective, the self and the other. If our current political climate is quick to tribalize into "us" vs. "them," demarcating affinities and antagonisms, we must ask: how can we build community without falling into the trap of alienating the other?

For the better part of the last decade (and arguably much longer), American democracy has weathered the seemingly unstoppable rise of populism, partisanship, and inequality. But Ostoya's work resists the contemporary impulse towards cynicism. These works remind us that identity is not a static position but rather an ever-changing set of relations. Ostoya invites us to remain curious about these changes; to reframe how we look at ourselves and others. In that spirit, we have gathered several writers—among them artists, a poet, a musician, and a novelist—to offer their own responses to this series of paintings for this booklet.

THE BIG ALLEGORIES

Moyra Davey

There's nothing more difficult than describing things from reality. These aren't made-up descriptions.
- Annie Ernaux

I'm often moved by the sight of passengers boarding NYC buses—sometimes it's older people, more often it's visitors and their wide-eyed children, off-kilter in their steps, tentative, as they unsteadily find their place. Front-facing passengers on the bus have front row seats to this daily negotiation. Since the advent of the double-long accordion buses with multiple entrances, it is a bit less of a gauntlet.

On the subway, we are exposed and must trust. There is a tacit understanding that only the briefest glances between strangers is permitted; if you are curious about other humans, you must be discreet. Regardless, there is a long history of artists and writers testifying to the reliability of buses and trains as sites of inspiration, from Edgar Degas on the streetcar ("On est fait pour se regarder, quoi?"), to Hervé Guibert imagining the bus as a giant, mobile tripod, to Lydia Davis singing the praises of public transport to the airport, as a sacred time and space for writing.

In the past I've tasked myself with writing descriptions of fellow subway riders, and I'm struck each time with so many aspects of physiognomy and behavior—body type, clothing, accessories, facial expression, posture—where to begin? I try not to overthink it and start with the most compelling details. Surprisingly, these word sketches are quite evocative when I reread them.

Anna Ostoya made pencil sketches of subway riders on the J M Z lines between Brooklyn and Manhattan; she was likely above ground on the Williamsburg Bridge for some of the drawings, and would have had the benefit of natural light, the drama of the old suspension bridge, the water of the East River, the Manhattan skyline. Her sketches are akin to my jottings, and I get the sense that Anna, doubtful of her ability to capture so much detail in a finite amount of time, also just dove in. Her quick pencil interpretations reliably depict a sleeping man, a stern-looking man, a woman wearing a turban-like head covering and a heavy

overcoat, a young man with a branded woolen sports cap, a middle-aged woman's knotted neck-scarf and downcast gaze.

Anna told me the crowds on the subway made her think of "the big allegories—Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and Holbein's *Totentanz* engravings." The latter, filled with skeletons taunting the living, are memento mori, but as she pointed out, they also signal its inverse: "be aware of life."

In her portrait paintings, derived from the thumbnails and interim digital collages, Anna scaffolds her subjects into icons. The paintings are machine-age assemblages that are novelistic in scope, invoking swaths of humanity, history circling a central figure with multiple genres of painting:

- *Saf*, which might derive from the above-mentioned sketch of the turban-clad woman, has a background composed of a multitude of carefully rendered female heads in indigo blue. To my eye this dream-like assembly of faces signaled Surrealism, as in, the muse-portraits of the era. I was not so far off, they are women of the avant-garde, as Anna later informed me. A companion painting, *Lee*, with a wide-open *Chien Andalou* eye at the center, features a montage of male figures of the avant-garde.

- *Ina*, a striking silhouette distinguished by a prominent, cascading ponytail, is painted in a frankly mannerist style. The visage is made up of fists, a tiny planet earth (?), but mostly fabric-like folds and drapery, and sinewy forms suggestive of muscle and tendons.

- The figure in *Ong* could also be the turbaned woman—but with its bluish tones and ants crawling across forehead and nose (based on a still from Buñuel's film, it turns out), the feeling is melancholic and suggests the vanitas side of the allegory of life-death.

In a beautiful profile of her first painting teacher in Krakow, Barbara Leoniak, Anna invoked a goth-like figure with Cartesian principles: "Art, like math, was a tool to approach the truth... Expression was a byproduct of investigation, never an aim in itself."

In one of our final exchanges, having identified my epigraph, I thought to ask Anna if she read Annie Ernaux, who wrote about her commutes on the suburban RER trains in France. Anna had, and pulled a copy of *Les Années* [*The Years*] from a nearby bookcase. In the spirit of Leoniak's pedagogy, which is of course a succinct characterization of Anna's mature style, Anna replied that she appreciated Ernaux precisely because the author had found a way to link her personal stories to collective histories.

Ernaux writes about catching sight of a young woman as she opened a package on a moving train, and watches as she unwraps a delicate garment from its box and tissue paper, holding it up admiringly. She is touched by the young woman's candid gestures and expressions of happiness. Ernaux wrote often about shopping and buying new clothes, she is not embarrassed to portray herself as a consumer, as someone who likes and enjoys nice things; her examination of such private moments and desires is often within the context of seduction, other times framed by notions of class, and class migration. The young woman observed is both among the riders and alone with her purchase and pleasure, a permeable self that I also find in these paintings that start with the denizens of the J M Z.

THE PASSENGERS

Mónica de la Torre

For Anna Ostoya

To feel I'd have to take off a mask. State of mind? "Discombobulated" in mock-Latin. Lack of clarity, ambiguity, conflicting desires. I wish to be open, receptive, connected, while I also wish I could disappear. I withdraw, ashamed of being, almost physically, half-here.

*

Harlequin blouse, school-teacher hairdo. Plaster molding instead of gray matter. Impenetrable volume. Identity disarticulated into parts that don't add up.

*

Lost in concentration, pinwheel for a mind. The movement's source, the turbulence of his emotions. Sometimes his ideas are too big. If only he could seize a cloud and stick it on his lapel, he'd be god.

*

The cap, a prosthetic almost fully integrated into the rest of the body, as if containing the distance contemplated. The gaze: almost wistful, despite the outfit's suggestion of rainbows and the brushstrokes texturing the face.

*

Within her, the children she's carrying, their clenched fists. Features obscured by the folds. Wrung-out fabric completes the figure. In the ponytail, a whole cultural history.

*

Functional invisibility achieved. Self as memory. A tangle of cords against a dark background of drips. Wedged under the prefrontal cortex, its invisible circuitry made almost visible. The world around consisting of verticals, horizontals, and the occasional exception.

*

One mouth for all the gazes she has internalized. Seated lips. Inside, spectacular visions of acrobats and fires. Alphabetic writing the medium.

*

A ruffled collar delineates the illusion. Dignified Pierrot, silent amid a sea of pink, dreaming of shapeshifting creatures. You say *blue eyes* and I picture this opacity.

*

Corrugated head over a geometric torso. The clash between pastels and primary colors here dramatized. Where's your nose? I look for your difference, but you're focused on someone beyond the frame. That's what listening intently looks like.

*

Overflowing inner world, even though she swallows her syllables and the gloom of her thoughts engulfs her. They taste blue, like the ants crawling up her face. She'd rather stay here than be consoled by someone else who we won't see. Her pupils anchored to the picture plane.

*

Minus-two weather but dressed in shorts and a cropped tank top. Walking towards the exit and laughing excitedly. Connected by wires to somebody else. As she passes me, I hear her say: "The system is obstructed by people like you."

*

The seductive authority of a gaze that looks back at the men who project their gazes onto her. A prism's repose. Amid panels of men in suits, a voice conveyed by the eye. Auras of deep, warm colors. The voice is a personal, untransferable attribute.

*

Forehead, a great forehead. Young-looking until he speaks. While doing so, his facial muscles reposition themselves. Hollows form around his eyes. His jaw juts out and his cheeks bulge slightly. That great forehead wrinkled prematurely with the force of the gesticulator whose anxiety shines right through.

*

I can't read you. Choose your preferred adjective and/or your preferred noun. Radiant. Somber. Fractured. Tender. Humble. Soft. Assertive. *Jolie laide*. Operator. At a certain age, we join anonymity, mixing in with the others and no longer perceiving the majority of details we encounter. All of us, in the mind of someone else, at some point or another have a double.

*

Now, hardly anybody looks up. Mostly I see people's various ways of being absent, elsewhere, lost, listening or talking to people who aren't there; admiring themselves on their black mirrors; or speaking loudly of Satan, sin, the Second Coming and the Apocalypse to people who'd do anything to shut them up. People only seem present if they're riding in somebody else's company. The young happy couple on a date or the group of young women dressed identically in sequined minidresses and wearing devil's horn tiaras one night. It wasn't Halloween and they were getting ticketed for jumping the turnstile, a misdemeanor punishable by a year in jail, as it turns out.

WHERE WE'RE CALLING FROM Lamin Fofana

1. Where are we calling from?
2. Harlem, New York.
3. Completely surrounded by no trees.
4. Resisting a desire to order things.
5. Sequencing and sound design and *all that pruning*.
6. *Our desire for harmony is arbitrary and in another world harmony would sound incomprehensible.*
7. Where we're calling from.
8. Across 116th Street,
9. Little Senegal, Upper Guinea.
10. Africans surviving and transcending
11. Atmospheric prejudice.
12. We've been here for centuries
13. In rehearsal
14. & moving
15. Traversing deserts and seascapes.
16. Slow Atlantic Crossings
17. Never arriving
18. On Nostrand or Fulton
19. Still moving
20. & making appearances

21. We're in Brooklyn
22. An African Village in Bedford-Stuyvesant
23. Across the river
24. Blocks away from the African Burial Ground
25. Blocks away from Seneca Village
26. East of the East River
27. All we're doing is answering the call
28. *And the call is always a call to disorder or
wildness, noise, cacophony, the extra-musical...*
29. Further out
30. *Cut that city*
31. In the outskirts
32. On the Southside of Queens
33. We New York draped in metal and fiber optics
34. We're implicated on the spectrum
35. With specters and mercenaries trading tips for profits
36. Amidst the harbor lights
37. We remain in the distance
38. Inscrutable
39. And moving
40. In this port city
41. Jackson Heights, Flushing, Elmhurst
42. Headful of dreams
43. One foot on the ground and the other outside the planet

44. Turning
45. Dreaming..
46. Orbiting
47. A space of possibility
48. Unknowability
49. Trying to get back to that feeling
50. The smell of the ocean expanding in our lungs
51. Salty and warm,
52. Acidic, briny, dyspeptic, submarine
53. Neptunian aroma
54. & we're dreaming..
55. Stretching meaning
56. Thinking the unthinkable
57. On planetary scales
58. Histories of migration
59. Constant movement of people
60. All the overlapping experiences
61. And movement over land and sea
62. And Ocean surrounds us
63. *The earth is water*
64. We live on a planet of water
65. That oceanic feeling
66. The memory of memories.

WHAT WE DID

Angie Keefer

I first met Anna Ostoya at a public reading of a short text I had written to accompany a collaged picture book made with another artist, one volume in a series mining the contents of art libraries. The text described the method we followed to make our book, which initially led to disappointment: “We walked slowly around the stacks, running our fingers across the spines of every book in every section ... Each time we felt a tingle, we pulled a book off the shelf, until we had accumulated a large pile of tingly volumes ... We sat down at a table under the eaves on the top floor of the library to thumb through the books one by one. With a soft focus, we scanned for resonances. We photographed any image that vibrated, even slightly. We uploaded our pictures to the cloud. We reviewed them on our computer screen at home. We found we had amassed an incoherent collection of pictures from unrelated books—too many variables, too much time spanned, indefinite parameters, insufficient data—not an archive, just a jumble.” A few months later, I visited Anna at her studio where she showed me her *J M Z* paintings. I was surprised by the differences between the objects I was seeing in person and the images of them I had seen online. Looking at the paintings themselves, I lingered over each one, compulsively speculating about the logic informing the various compositions. What binds so many seemingly disparate parts into formally coherent wholes? How do each of these paintings, with their respective unpredictable elements, manage to constitute a group? What kinds of pictures are these? What kinds of stories are they telling? I realized that the same questions hadn’t occurred to me when looking at digital images of Anna’s paintings on my screen beforehand. There, I had skimmed without comprehending, consumed without digesting. I had mistaken paintings for data.

My book text continued an account of our fumbling journey: “Perhaps we just weren’t looking closely enough? We experimented with magnified pairs and sequences. At maximum zoom, we rediscovered the tingle on the level of the pixel and the Ben-Day dot. We could again sense stories on the tips of our tongues. Believing our work was done, we sent our enlargements to print, but when our book returned from press, we found that the essence had slipped away once more, this time through the crack between screen and page. So, we pulled, folded, and sliced our book, narrowing, expanding, and recombining its contents until, at last, we regained the dynamic equilibrium we were after.” We cut every page

of the book by hand. Consecutive pages in irregular shapes rendered unexpected visual overlaps, adjacencies, elisions, interruptions. In retrospect, the apparently formal, intuitive, and distinctly material solution we ultimately arrived at pertained as much to the capabilities of digital tools and ethereality of electronic transmissions as to the touchy, tingly materiality of the library and the offset press. I projected a similar ambivalence onto *J M Z* after seeing the works up close. I wasn’t surprised to learn that Anna developed the paintings over many years by documenting, scanning, rejoining, and painting again the elements of her personal archive. The results felt sharp but not fast.

The remainder of my text unspooled like a daydream within and between technological possibilities shaping our collective present—a digital recording of ocean waves captured on a cellphone; an imagined ride through the tunnels of a particle accelerator on an underground bullet train; a recollection of a film about a sentient AI on the brink of love screened on a trans-oceanic flight; that week’s news of international scientists’ successful destruction of an asteroid of the type that might one day collide with Earth, causing mass extinction. In Anna’s paintings I perceived kindred stories of subjects folding into themselves unresolved, perhaps irresolvable realities, humans entwined with their technologies, seeing and dreaming worlds they could not have otherwise imagined or perceived. Here, figure and ground, source and reference, whole and part, scale, color, depth, and surface—fundamentals of painting and moreover of image-making—vibrate and interfere with one another, resisting stable identities and oppositions. What binds so many disparate elements within the frame of a picture? Within a single subject? Within a population of subjects? Is formal logic also and always cultural logic?

Quoted text from *MMDC3: Angie Keefer*, originally commissioned and published in 2022 by Kunstenbibliotheek and BILL.

RETURN OF *THE BLUE CARROT*

Mark von Schlegell

“Among the fragments of perception, always the Special Op, in the elasticity, must know and taste Timeline 0 for what it is: namely, home sweet home.”

-- “Greetings Agent” Section 1:00 TymeX Tutorial 0022

>wear the white and black
>be entrusted with the Abbey’s gold
>be passing through the woods after sunset, alone
>darkness gathers ominously in the ancient trees
>how-stupid-can-you-get.jpg
>take a turn to find way is blocked by a score of mounted warriors.
>pleasegodpleasegodplease
>helmeted leader approaches on a cocky steed
>dirty mail glistens like fire in the falling sun
>tirene copper-colored silverfish
>ragged tunic of green imbued with three orange diamonds and a blue proboscis
>mechanical head emits a voice
>“You ride to the Abbey on the Rhine?”
>“The Abbot himself has entrusted--”
>“There is a toll tax, on this road, villain. Your baggage will suffice”
>“But these bags belong to the holy Church by grant--”
>“Shut thy foul and lying mouth, false cleric. Debased vulgar. Dost thou defy Gabriel de Bagatelle?”
>the knight draws his sword
>dropandrun.com

Non walked slowly along the darkened sidewalk, deep in his own thoughts. Wasn’t he supposed to remember something? He hadn’t found the beacon, damn it. The air had grown colder; it was the wind from the ocean. The yellow sky had gone dark, and there weren’t any stars. His stomach growled. The feel of it took him out of the city for a moment. He remembered the town where he used to live across the erapause from here. Non wrapped his thoughts around his

shoulders, with this thin, useless windbreaker. The fork must be coming. Where was the sign?

And there on the front steps to an abandoned brownstone, he found it.

Doctor’s office? Of course. The technology was familiar: digital clock, typewriter, telephone, AM/FM radio.

A quick pat suggested the timephone was in the low, right side-pocket. Non already felt better. Many observations came swirling into his already cramped brain.

She wore big, heavy-rimmed glasses. She wore a skirt suit, dressed like a middle-aged bourgeois of that era. According to his education, his training, actually by the whole ideology of TimeX, and the HFH behind it, he naturally expected the Doctor would be male. Was this variant Samuelson’s needless attempt to outwit the Revival? A cunning move, of course.

“So,” she said. “Where were we?”

“A good question,” Non replied. “I can’t answer. I’m sorry. I was elsewhere.” When at all possible, stick to true statements.

She sat at right angles to him, at her desk. The lamp on it burned an incandescent bulb. He felt her eyes on his face.

Why was he nervous?

“You really have no idea what we were just talking about? You seemed quite ... impassioned, moments ago.”

What sort of patient did she believe him to be? Those able to trade most easily out with the chrononaut were the mentally ill. Grade A lunatics preferred. Which meant as a professional psychiatrist, she might at least pretend to accept the truth from these lips. That was all he needed.

The ability to embody sanity in insane conditions distinguished the Special Op in the field. Non spoke as calmly, as matter-of-factly, as it was possible to speak. “Let’s say I just got here,” he said. “I replaced whomever was seated here talking to you (and I mean their entire lifestream) with my own.”

“... That explains why you stopped speaking in mid-sentence.”

“I’m trained so that with technological access I can intersect with any given brain from the tree of life to which we all are attached, even you. Once I’ve interacted, it all depends on flow.”

“Why here? My office? And why tell me the truth?”

“Honestly, I’m still just understanding these things. I don’t have time to dissemble. I cannot look back. I must only continue looking outwards from a reality fully streamlined with the possibility field

afforded this station -- and make appropriate decisions and statements along its previously broadcast waves."

Her pencil made stroking sounds on the rough cream paper -- then came to a stop.

"By 'station,' you mean body?"

He was surprised she could follow him. "Yes."

"What year is this?" she asked.

He hadn't managed to see his timephone screen. So he said, out of the blue: "1987." He put it out like a gambit -- ten years off target.

The pencil dashed.

"What year were you born?"

It was the perfect question. Sure enough, he felt a buzzing on his leg. A timephone in this era generally swapped out with a male wallet. Particularly sensed in these tight artificial trousers.

"Good-bye," Non said, "It was nice talking," and answered the humming call.

Nova Amsterdam Hospital 1977 smelled sour, like an enormous, ancient spittoon. For the most part the way to obstetrics was as solemn as the expressions on the faces of the frightened sisters and lurking males -- as shabby and as long used. Somewhere very near a woman was moaning in extraordinary pain.

Non stopped by a greasy window and looked through at a group of five newborn babies receiving varied forms of special care. He let his eyes pass over, and noticed only two boys.

Eye contact with neither caused a fork.

Non was not an emotional person. His very identity was to come and go. Never stay still. One was always on the way to somewhere else more important: Timeline 0. Home. Of course this was not it. Why would he panic? Non had no doubt he could generate an anomaly, and create a fork from this fall.

"Can I help you?"

He approached the station casually. Was it his imagination? The nurse's eyes reached out with more than ordinary interest. She seemed a bright and sunny person, only partially enshadowed by the oblong world.

"I could actually be my own father," he said. "Isn't that odd?"

It didn't phase her. "Are you looking for a particular child?"

"Do you have a list of names?"

"Ours don't have first names yet."

She kept looking in his eyes. He knew what this was, most likely. "We come from different layers of the erapause," he said. "There is a mutual fascination. It's natural."

An eyebrow lifted high. Signifying what, it was impossible to say.

"Your name's Non, isn't it?"

A sudden silence in the ward was now pierced by a baby's ragged cry.

Was *she* the Doctor? Real fear, not the first of the day, stabbed him. He felt a vibration against his left breast, and the pure field of the timephone's natural resonance came like a sweet rain on a drought.

Intuitions kicked in, and as they did memories unstacked. Non composed himself, remembering not to smell or taste or attempt to know the body he occupied at all.

"Non? Are you back?"

Back? With the doctor? The office felt strange, familiar. But the doctor was still a woman, and she wore hexagonal glasses.

"Back? How could I be 'back'?" Had he bounced and returned? A quick pat suggested a loaded low right side-pocket. The hands on the clock pointed to 1:47.

"I just asked."

"Ask me something else," he said, easily.

"Ok. Let's see. Why do you speak perfect colloquial English to me? If you come from all that time in the future? How is it that you can communicate--"

"Because this brain, this head, mouth, speaks for me. The reason I'm back here with you again, if that's what happened, is because my supervisor, Samuelson, is an idiot. Someone hasn't gotten me out of the pod at the right time."

"So why come here, Vespusia, 1977?"

"Did you say 1977?"

"I did. Do you smoke meerstool by the way?"

"No." Did she say 'Meerstool?' 'Vespusia?' Come to think of it, the office smelled strange.

"So you're alive now twice? In two presents simultaneously?" she asked.

"We're all alive many, many times," he answered. "A million billion mouths at once, connected like in an infinity mirror." His mouths spoke in time-contour, and he could almost see it.

"It must be hard," she said. "For you to talk to people in the past. You must think we're inferior to you."

It was true. Despite having trained against pride in the fact, Non knew he was superior when he talked to her.

What sort of Doctor was this, anyway? Her questions worried him. And why would he or his surrogate be visiting such a person in such a clearly out of the way office? The room was dark, anonymously featured; she was clearly not the sort of Professional TymeX typically targeted. This was more like the Writer's office. He hadn't been directed to the Writer in this mission.

"The book in your right side-pocket," she said. "May I see it?"

"Book?" Instinctively, sliding his hand into that silky-lined cranny to grip, Non went hollow in shock. It was not timephone. It was a paperback book.

In most Earths-of-the-Books the Writer took the books TymeX brought them. They then published them into the current timeline to identify that line forever. *The Blue Carrot* by C.A. Sterne. The improbable title and the ridiculous cover physically sickened him. He handed it over almost gratefully.

The station almost leaped from the chair in horror, when the normphone rang.

"You lost your timephone."

True. His pockets were all empty. "Well, thanks to you no doubt--"

"You know how difficult it was to place this call? You know how much probability this has cost?"

"Are you in pod? How can you be? I am in pod."

"Don't ask what you can't comprehend. You just gave the timephone away. You realize an untended timephone can double as a demolator?"

He looked at the writer, still examining the book in her hands.

"I can't remember by definition. But the phone tells the time and place. Which is there, precisely, three minutes ago, someone tricked you into handing over your timephone.."

"I want to talk to the Old Man."

"What?"

"One on one. I demand it. Now. Put him on."

"You're nuts. You think I'm here out of the goodness of my fucking heart? All our lives are on the line here, you nitwit."

Non hung up on himself.

Non still remembered a surprising amount. He remembered the Writer would be the only one who could, who would believe in the agent.

"I never wrote this book," she said. She turned it around. The portrait on the back cover was of herself, complete with hexagonal glasses. The term *Blue Carrot* meant nothing to him. Worse than nothing. C. A. Sterne -- an inexplicably loathsome name.

"It's not a book," he told her. "It's a dangerous radioactive projection. Give it back to me. Immediately."

"Really?"

He took the book, hungrily, like a hound takes a throat.

Brother Non had never traveled this far east from his cell. He should have felt blessed at all to be a servant of

the Abbey, and trusted on such a mission. But these were indeed the end days. He arrived in Magdeburg on a raging day. There had been an all-night breaking and destruction of a commune, and the town was smoldering still.

Ruffians stood about in doorways, brandishing clubs, grasping strings of beads and golden goblets. Fallen women, given over to the thugs, prolonged the night with foreheads bare, tossing epithets and refuse drunkenly from narrow windows. Just another Magdeburg morning.

As Non led his party along the old Roman road he was shocked to see rows of human heads staking the way. When he arrived at the unfinished Cathedral, he found work had ceased on the site. But the beggars lining up around the one functional nave were a fright to behold.

Non oversaw the tying of his beasts to village stakes. He hoisted the sacks of the Abbey's gold tribute onto his own and his villeins' backs. They passed through a gauntlet of soldiers into a tented, flame-lit interior. A long queue snaked out from the altar. Frankincense snaked silkily through odour of rot and human filth. All sorts stood waiting to give various tributes to the Bishop.

After hours in line, Non presented his sacks, and his letter from the Abbot. Flanked by helmeted men at arms, the Archdeacon proved as rough as speech as of visage.

"What am I supposed to do with all that bribe here, you fool? Magdeburg is dangerous right now. Do you want to draw unnecessary attention to the Bishopric at this time? We will have this counted, then you shall return it to your Abbot at once. The Bishop comes to the Abbey for St. Martin's day and will discuss it privately, if he so is inspired. And be assured. He will hold your Abbey responsible for every farthing."

The yellow pages had gone dark. Non shut the book. He emerged from the underground. There weren't any stars. Nearer hopelessness than ever for reasons he no longer remembered, he moved alone along the darkening way. The air had grown colder; the wind came from the north, no longer tasting of ocean. It took his mind out of the city for a moment, suddenly, to a town where he couldn't possibly live. He felt ill. He wrapped his windbreaker around himself, impossibly homesick in this vertiginous fall. At a door stoop, he paused. It was not a timephone he found, but a shoe.

Absurdly he shook it to see if it was some hologram. A single from a pair of high-heeled women's pumps, unbuckled, there for the taking.

Would the anomaly spark a fork?

Non stood beneath the tall street-light, fixed like an actor alone on the stage. Greenscreen dreams and mapscreens made the ground a

long and glistening fold in the always something else. Fantastical vistas glittered from portals all around; silver, red, and bluegreen color-fields stretched into possible horizons. He himself rose among an outgrowth of text from a triangular cut far in the southeast portion of the distant visible.

As he began to read, the fields broke, not horizontally but vertically. New branches opened up into high backstories and low previews; pseudo-spaces piled up onto each other's surface until the illusion's history sparked into real depth. As he chased them, words clarified nothing but these empty spaces. Out of this widening nothing, into this diamond shaped hole, there now encroached a jagged, living, anti-orange *thing*. He could not stop reading.

The proboscis of a mighty carrot, root-hair not quite shaved, bounced into view.

She demolated the timeline. Then she closed the door to the abandoned rooms she'd filled with so many dreams and plans, where she had plotted, studied, consulted, and revisited, for hours longer than eternal, a plot that had now very likely achieved its intended goal.

Would anyone figure out exactly how and what she had done? She assumed the Happy Fascist Hegemony (if that's what they really called themselves) would pour over every fragment they could gather for every clue. They would interrogate every possible witness. But she had worked entirely alone, without aid from the Revival at all (if the Revival was a real thing and not simply a fiction TymeX implanted in its agents).

Perhaps this was the Revival. Certainly the Revival had to start somewhere. She walked slowly down the broken stairs. Unless someone was waiting for her to emerge, today would be the proof "the Revival" or something like it was possible.

She did not pause before opening the sun-paned door.

Outside, she stood on the stoop, entirely unremarked upon by a multitude of alternate points-of-view. Creatures took timelines in directions all about her. Trees turned sunward; birds raced to the future. But no assassins aimed. No messengers approached at great speed.

The air from the sea was clear, scented even with Croatoa, she thought. Fleets of fleecy clouds crossed the sky, en route to distant shores. Removing the wig, the false glasses, kicking off her shoes, she stepped barefoot onto the pavement. Let the Hegemony self-lock in self-looping lines. She must join all the living, passing world. She must be the one who belonged.

All works by Anna Ostoya
Oil on canvas
22 × 26 inches

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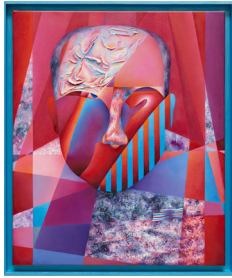
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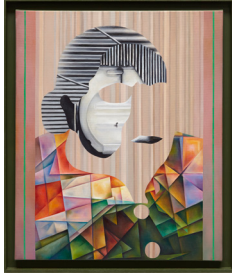
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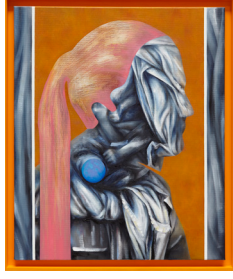
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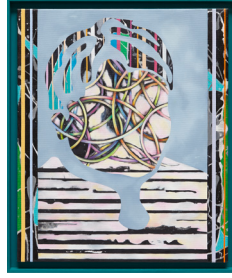
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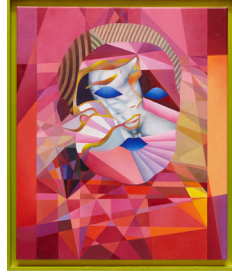
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