

24 February - 21 April 2024

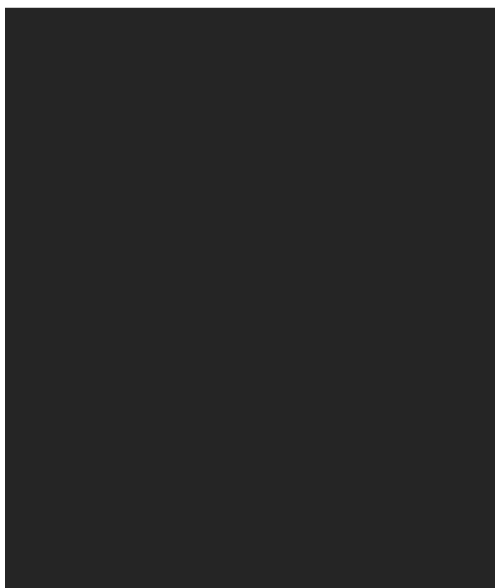
THREE DRAMATURGICAL FRAGMENTS

Joseph Breikers

ANNA CHRISTINA OLSON

The following things in Christina's world were Phthalo Blue: a leather ottoman; a note book; seven coasters — one pinned by a pewter Toby-jug (not blue); a pair of woollen socks and one lap-blanket; a glass paper weight; a draped Phthalo Blue rag; three two-litre tins of mistint International Klein Blue (hue off by 10°, perceived luminous emittance out by 11%); a ledged and braced door flanked by kitchen and woodshed. Phthalo Blue also gave slight optical relief to an otherwise aggressively ugly medal awarded to Christina's ancestor, John Hathorn, for services to the state of Massachusetts. Hathorn was baptised on Friday ("Dies faustus!") August 2, 1641,¹ mutated into a typically uncivil civil-officer, then proceeded to slapstick his way through a # of circus-courts: most notably, those legal proceedings which involved the supernatural.

As self-appointed J.,² J.,³ & E.⁴ w/r/t the Salem Witch Trials, Hathorn relied heavily on 'spectral evidence' — court lingo for 'fair trials are for wimps! this friend of the devil is GUILTY-GUILTY-GUILTY-BURN-THE-HERETIC-PURGE-THE-UNCLEAN'⁵ — to demonstrate the alleged witchy-ness of each witch, and send every single one to the gallows (the summer of 1692 was hellish, there was a total fire ban). However, in a kind of mirthless-laugh-through-the-nose twist of fate, John Hathorn was in fact a descendant of Caecilia the Haruspex of ancient Rome. Despite being pronounced legally blind at age thirteen, Caecilia could divine the future through Haruspicy: the art of reading animal guts. So, while he condemned witches, John "AKA That God Damned Two-Faced Janus" Hathorn was also practising this ancient form of entrail-divination. And so it was that on the eve of December 10, 1692, while mucking his way through the innards of a Meishan pig (recently deceased), Hathorn divined that, somewhere down the line, witches would pepper his family tree like bright red (possibly poisoned) apples, and put exactly 1600, give or take, *wegstunde* between themselves and that accursed Salem. Christina Olson was one such apple.



"Phthalo Blue, sGY."

Unfortunately, Christina's witchery came at a cost; Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease. This particular HMSN⁶ bound and broke Christina. It ate flesh and put bones out of kilter. It caused tremorous hands and made a melodrama of her Witches Squint. It furnished her with Hammertoes, *pes cavuc*, and pronounced 'stork legs'. At times her strained voice seemed to hiss through gnashed teeth. And she could have jammed both hands into a roaring tavern fire and not felt a *gottverdamm*t thing.

Flying (as witches are wont) in the face of these ailments, Christina proudly refused a wheelchair for most of her life. It wasn't until her autumnal years ("Pure Hell.") that she cut her hair to a flattering bob that sat just below her fleshy jawline, and finally became an enthusiastic 'wheeler'. BW,⁷ she would basically drag herself around the house — her right hip angled down, shoulders listing to starboard, and her torso twisting upward to face forward, legs entwined and trailing — with her long bony arms. It was almost serpentine. Almost.

Christina lived in a labyrinthine house perched, battered yet imposing, atop a lithic knoll, behind which loomed the Harz Mountains⁸ (so *gott allein weiß* how she became an icon of American Bucolic Retreat). Visitors who sought her arcane knowledge often commented on the spectral miasma that filled the house: doors locked and unlocked of their own accord; threadbare tapestries changed before your very eyes; the furniture was forever rearranging *itself*;⁹ something (→ animal, definitely → human) lived in the walls and, given the constant muffled swearing and thumping, was hilariously clumsy; autumnal loiterers prowled the periphery; and the "darkened house seemed to groan and roll with the swell of Christina's voice and breathing."¹⁰ They, Christina and the house, gave pretty much everyone the creeps. Even those desperate, or vengeful, enough to seek the witch's aid.

Here's the thing...

The centuries of witchcraft and divination practised in that house had Swiss-cheesed The Veil, allowing Christina to consort with all manner of paracausal entities. This, in turn, enabled her to slowly transform the entire house into a kind of live-in Sovereign Vessel meant to safeguard her soul upon death. On the morning of Christina's physical passing, villagers from Schierke¹¹ spoke in superstitious whispers of a menacing *brockengespenst* haunting nearby Wurmberg Peak.

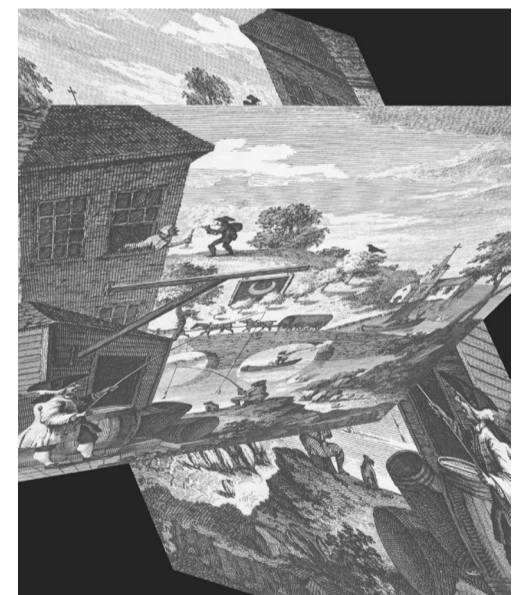
VIEWPOINTING: A BRIEF HISTORY OF
PERSPECTIVE (ABRIDGED AND DRAMATISED)

- "A Canadian walks into a bar."
- "..."
- "Goes 'Ouch, eh?'"

This was almost entirely due to the fact that said Canadian — stage-name, Dr. Kluge — walked, without exception, backwards using a stolen wing mirror to see what he was walking towards (backwardly), and often into (backwardly). It was 'often into' owing to the fact that; warning; objects in mirror are closer than they appear. As Dr. Kluge put it one evening at sunset, "These bruises and lacerations, and the occasional avulsion, all accidentally self-inflicted, are basically the product of optics and perspective (graphical)."

The systematic theory of perspective (graphical) we enjoy today came of age at an almost glacial pace. It was present in ancient Greece then, like *ein gespenst*, it was gone. Then, some time later, AaA¹² rediscovered these theories, and commenced their perspectival trifling once more.

Spooling back. In ancient Greece, philosopher and chief scenic artist Theano of Croton, employed *skenographia* to create illusions of depth for theatre stage-settings. And property-glutton, Alcibiades, had many a *skenographic* fresco painted in his many homes to allude to space that was not-really-there and, in turn, a market value also not-really-there. Then came The Great Amnesia, and "some things that should not have been forgotten were lost. History became legend. Legend became myth. And for two an a half thousand years, [perspective (graphical)] passed out of all



"Towards total omniscience."
knowledge."¹³

"It was actually," Dr. Kluge here, "more like one point eight thousand years." On the eve of the renaissance, AaA once again began their experiments in perspective (graphical). Multiple vanishing points were enthusiastically employed across the picture plane with no real consistency, but with much comic affect. Converging beams and tiles (not eyes) followed the viewer around the room, hooped mammals appeared as large as keeps, Wallachian court cupboards vanished *towards* the viewer, and one gargantuan patrician dominated the foreground of Fra Filippo Lippi's *The Feast of Herod*.

Architect Filippo Brunelleschi was the first to produce a series of architectural studies in correct, single-point perspective. Fifteen years later, in 1435, Leon Battista quilled *De pictura*, demonstrating how rays of light, lasering between landscape and eye, would strike (graphically) the picture plane. Alberti smote many a fine canvas, and oak panel, perfecting his method. In the seventies, the fourteen-hundred-seventies, Piero della Francesca advanced Alberti's theory, adding a few more perspective points along the way, in his work *De prospectiva pingendi*, with many a nod to Eukleides' *Optics* and *The Elements*.

At present, single-point through to six-point perspective (graphical) are the most common. But, theoretically, one could keep adding perspective points all the way up to total omniscience (namely, a 'Tetouvian', a real-number which lies just beyond infinity).

WELL WELL WELL-BEING-IN-DER-WELT

An act that is a pleasurable dilemma. An act to keep one busy. An act for itself. A comic act. An act of hubris. A formal, or conceptual act. An act of rational madness. An act to hang above couches, along hallways, and above cisterns. An act of involvement, of engagement. A political act. A social act. An act that elevates the banal. An act that acknowledges that "[...] quantity has a quality of its own."¹⁴ An act that makes you think twice. A world-building act. A marginal act. An act of evasion and sleight-of-hand. An alchemical act. An act of abstraction. An act of revelation. An act of gleeful wrongheadedness. An act of thesis. An act of anti-thesis. An act that consumes earth's closest celestial body.



"To seek the witch's aid."

List of works, left to right

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>Better Than</i> (2020)
89 x 120 cm, acrylic on canvas | 14. <i>I am appalled by the number of people who don't wear hats when walking in the Warrumbungles.</i> (2022)
85 x 123 cm, charcoal on paper |
| 2. <i>I am optimistic sometimes.</i> (2020)
90 x 130 cm, acrylic on canvas | 15. <i>My World</i> (2022)
86 x 123 cm, charcoal and graphite on paper |
| 3. <i>Bird of Paradise</i> (2020)
74 x 94 cm, charcoal on paper | 16. <i>The Wheel rises to 25 kilometres above sea level: The permafrost is melting.</i> (2022)
87 x 104 cm, acrylic on canvas |
| 4. <i>Coming and Going</i> (2021)
64 x 94 cm, acrylic on canvas | 17. <i>They went to the cinema and afterward talked about the inevitability of science, the thrill of discovery, human nature, the risk of nationalism and why indigenous people in Australia did not develop the nuclear bomb.</i> (2023)
106 x 73 cm, acrylic on canvas |
| 5. <i>Stepping in</i> (2022)
76 x 96 cm, charcoal on paper | 18. <i>ism-is-easy selfie drawing</i> (2019)
94 x 190 cm, mixed media on paper |
| 6. <i>Stepping in</i> (2022)
76 x 96 cm, acrylic on paper | 19. <i>ism-is-easy selfie painting</i> (2019)
64 x 126 cm, acrylic on canvas |
| 7. <i>Arsonist</i> (2020)
56 x 63 cm, acrylic on paper | 20. <i>Viewpoint (pthalo blue)</i> (2023)
6 panels, 30 x 30 cm each, mixed media |
| 8. <i>Burn the planet.</i> (2020)
76 x 97 cm, charcoal on paper | 21. <i>Eat the moon.</i> (2023)
3 panels, 45 x 25 cm, mixed media |
| 9. <i>Burn the planet.</i> (2020)
76 x 97 cm, mixed media on paper | |
| 10. <i>Home</i> (2020)
76 x 96 cm, acrylic on paper (blue) | |
| 11. <i>Home</i> (2020)
76 x 96 cm, acrylic on paper (yellow) | |
| 12. <i>Piss off forever.</i> (2020)
76 x 94 cm, charcoal on paper | Centre of gallery |
| 13. <i>Mount Canobolas</i> (2021)
76 x 96 cm, charcoal on paper | 22. <i>Antithesis</i> (2015- 2023)
14 small sculptures |

¹Friday, the day of Hathorn's religious birth, would prove fitting given his familial arborescence and latent gifts. *Friday* from *friggjar-dagr* (Old Norse: 'Day of Frigg'). Frigg being, among other things, the Norse goddess of prophecy and clairvoyance. More on this later.

²Judge.

³Jury.

⁴Executioner.

⁵Judges at Witch Trials have a tendency to fly (Ha...!) into spluttering hysterics when passing (read: spitting) sentence.

⁶Hereditary motor and sensory neuropathy.

⁷Before Wheelchair.

⁸A centuries-old haven for all things not-of-this-welt, and exactly 1600, g./t., *wegstunde* from that accursed Salem.

⁹Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Brian Massumi (trans.) (London: Continuum, 2004), 23.

¹⁰Betsy James Wyeth in *Christina's World* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982), 20.

¹¹The nearest village to Christina Olson's ancestral home.

¹²Artists and architects.

¹³Lord of the Rings: *The Fellowship of the Ring*, directed by Peter Jackson (2001; New Line Cinema, 2002), 0:04:59, DVD, 1080p HD.

¹⁴The Art Guys in Lynn M. Herbert, "Fool's Paradise," in *The Art Guys: Think Twice 1983-1995*, ed. Polly Koch (New York: Harry N. Abrams Incorporated, 1996), 57.