

LOGOPOEIA Editor's Note:

With the growing prevalence of book competitions decided by judges, readers take it on faith that the book they are reading in print is the same as the manuscript that the judge selected. Many competitions, though, allow the author to make revisions after being chosen.

Standard Schaefer's *Nova*, winner of the 2001 National Poetry Series and published by Sun & Moon, differs radically from the manuscript originally accepted by the judge, Nick Piombino: revisions, emendations, expurgations, and over half a dozen poems omitted completely.

"Better" or "worse," these nine poems, excluded from the final version, are sometimes more lyrical, sometimes more autobiographical, and occasionally more sexual than the eventual book form of *Nova*. In either event, with significant "censored" themes, they argue for a very different re-interpretation of *Nova* as we know it.

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OVALNESS

AN OVAL CONTEMPLATES HIS GENERATION

for the College of Neglected Science

zeroes side to side with another,
filled with exactly the same words, and hair you could eat
takes the ocean for chaos just because of the octopus ink
but that horn gots to keep blowing, that hose gots to hold off the groundkeeper
lest the mad honk of annihilation rise like a black wave
oh rush of water, and us inside it, oh moon on river stretched ever oval
and in the guesswork along the wetlands, then cutting across the meltwash
because you got to there somehow, said the monk— shoulders dark and bent
notes off a piano— who said “simple ain’t easy” and since then,
became as mute as a moon that has no comet, but oh, jeez,
we got all the techniques we need
but oh, jeez—riding inside it
ova and nova—spaced and respect
and profusely assured by that freeway that surrounds us
so many stars, so many signs of rain—but ink is not chaos
and night is not a ride on a seal, although that’s the stain we’re in—
contemplating the incomprehension
between the young and the young,
each morning in the tub, make a bruise
but diffused in a novel about an internal state that emerges as an internal state
comes that pulsing, driving sound
cornering the shallows, steeping the anger— three lanes thick
and falling back asleep
beneath the lack of applause, with a dead fly on the tongue
it shrieks on and on about polite cause, then affiliated with a faint depression,
suavely falling across California or your shoulders, but it’s just seepage, Cat Pants,
and it’s at the heart of that doll that comes with an unbound feeling
 of being prepared
when your on the receiving side of another skeleton gone to butter
another doll boiled in a narrow room
one more night rendered unto Grog
as you slowly devour the headboard
and I swallow the ocean view, so glad to be here along the shore or sure of you.

THE OVAL GOES SOLO

“Chest tingling with vaporub, my heart beat distractedly
not to a tune, but to my misfortune I found myself slipping through the grate in the floor

and coming out on the other side, I found all of time pent behind the weir,
and I was holding the screws

so around the corner came the morning trumpet,
letting loose its slack fugue,

I was stalled in the turns of riddle and touring inside the heave
a speech not unlike the one from the mummy who beseeched me,
only this one asked: ‘How do like your often? Groggy and truant or
slightly recursive, with a virus and the little storm that keeps it warm?’

Well, when I awoke I found myself half-hurled out the window—seemingly
by my own hand, and on my shoulders some firewood
and order to carry it to a volcano, well, there I made the separation

lit a cigarette and watched the river
in some vain hope that it would quell the awful buzzing
between where I was and where I was not, for I had never been able to enjoy music
of the type doused with words,

Oh they seem the drum of little glass hammers and I require a purer set of statistics

When the adders surround me with their brute facts, that says so little about me,
drizzling against all that is clear and all that is distinct in a note or drop of rain,
if I were the cream...

THE OVAL IN PURGATORY

For EG

“from beneath this skirt of stars, the light comes
a gushing thing really, headlong on the rum of resurgence
or parvenus drunk on the butter left behind by pulsars
tipping their cup, letting loose the lusty atoms in their charge

but I had a hard candy
and sucked it

pacing back and forth through the only snow recorded,
I grew more robust

succulent

as any ovalet would once it refused to relent
and shed its rented body to dusted off
what he could of allusion
before ducking out during a referent's rant on
the habits of plain sight, in which it was sure to aver
all of history as a colon to nature

outside, the senses bluffed their way through the hoops in the chain linked fence,
as if it were a figure of speech,
and crossing toward the briny beach, a weedy impression mottled the affects

haunted by adders, if only the memory of their
more mathematical habits
suddenly sure that there purpose was to keep all odd thought from becoming
wild and outbound like rabbit

RE-ENTRY

flashbulbs, a flurry of receipts

coming headlong into the resilience,
then bound to rest

heels in the dash, and the lowering of the voice

when the wind shifts against who's with me and who's against me
when I'm going
where who's going with me
has already gone

light turnouts and forgetting
thick and bright,

a comma

or a decoy seeking occasion by way of throw signs and string theories

when the lights turnout

between science and morality

THREE ROCKS, THIRD DAY

Morning, gypped and cobbled
probes the glia and is restored to stillness
if stillness is through with moving through
or if the oven is held intact by appetite—
that comes bold faced, bells on through the dumb space
to moisten the flaps, pinion the vein
after whatever is covered and whatever can be
is subtracted from ashes, aerosol, and the inattention
paid to that reddening splotch on a nightshirt
by a previous abstraction loaded in ink
a reflex of ink and leaking through the bag
asps in the icebox, skinned assassins
adders relaxed, therefore omitted
as a matter of choice, and out of a lack of necessity that forces the lump to stay close and go on

comes that obvious newness blaring with the light
of what is bright again, almost new

THE OVAL'S FIRST TRUMPET

Selflessness, said the trumpette, leaves me unsatisfied
And yet it is there.

The breathy necklace, the drive to peel off
The oval's opal returning from the eaves.
Too fast to be patented, too pat to be polite
She retired into the misty chamber and set loose
the brooding bat from deep inside the sax.

Not the sexless honk of it, not the abrasive hush, half real
As it nuzzled the still uncancelled totality
But the being blown apart and scattered
Around a half-burnished sentence as it mounts its lousy samba on the fold.
While the rest of the combo comes back from the alley, broke
So it's time to review, always review:
Music is no more stable than poetry
But at least there ain't no blue jays in it
And sometimes you figure to break even
an ankle on a stairwell, a man in tenths
Something homeopathic to reconcile the shuffle to the breath
If it be only a stoned, brassy sound touring the heave.

SECOND TRUMPET

First rain, she says, then intuition.
They come and get us.
A discredited contagion of butterflies in some poem
Pinioned beneath disapproval in the stairwell
And tapped out in a long hall
Or waiting on a cube of cash
Can't help but catch the terrible sound of ordinary language
What careens out of the emptiness but pleas
Take the back steps,
The heirs in the stairway have hogged all the oxygen
And we'll be found out limp on the return
Trying to eke out a little take home
From what don't fly low enough and is afraid of dying.
More supple and abstract than the nothing that contains an echo
And or is captured in the valley of the heart's undoing
Maybe in Buffalo or volleying out from behind the embouchure
A contour will overtake numbers, temperatures, times of day
Carry the unnecessary and elegant inspirations around back
Beside the air conditioners up and down
Whether heaving or suddenly closed off, the steps
Are always buttressed with mildness and tempered with knowledge
Can't be held intact by a respirator, remark, or a mute.
Only in savage contemplation, does the spine
Stiffen under all this ink and fusion
Then we blow us a beauty we can stare at
Hostile and haphazard like a swan without her song
But it'll be brave as a gull or gulf and unnecessary
As how was it she put it? A gas.

THE OVAL'S DESK

Against smudged numbers and with a frayed sweetness,
Tapping my finger on a crumb, not starlust
Moving the ruler through the column and falling at several speeds
I collide with the carbonation at the cliff of a mirage,
And will gladly die, abridged
Here among the sham hollows, I can mount
My dog many times with the intention of shaking his pennies to the floor,
Or shifting powders back and forth through time,
Taking the time to separate the money, careful not to confuse it with time
The shape and color of broth.

But until me aged thunder wanes I desire to be as oily as late.
Harboring not no darker meaning than the unwillingness to be elaborate
By the mounting of dogs or peeling hack the fronds,
Content to rest in the exit wounds and discuss the teal lows
With a serious accuracy and a lack of grammar
Now that the sham hollows are with us forever,
I say farewell, Farewell to sorting us out, to telos,
And farewell to the caboose the shape and color of broth.

For if trains are confusing now then more so when airborne,
As I must be now, in my soapy ship in which I kiss daylight
And transfer through the drowsiness.
Trains cause drowsiness and transfers sort us out.
But creases and pleats crease and pleat.
How then may I warble?
How may I eat the lily beneath the instructions
And how is it you are my former employer?
And who do you work for that you are not drowsy
But have ghosts on the breath and still lisp a face?
While I fail to end the apprenticeship?

Is it that participation precedes the value of work
Or is it that awareness is preceded by participation?
Oh, I should think it all corrupt sky, satellites once more
A matter of the lens whether worn out by microscopes, heroes,
Or the mists that blot us out.
But there remains the matter of envelopes enclosed for convenience.
Could it be that our imagination is but events in the extreme?
Or is this abstraction all a form of drowsiness, smudged numbers and sham hollows.
They indeed lack any serious grammar.
But, while my envelope is still on the table and I inside, I fumble—
Somewhat complicit— toward the pulse or perforation in the distance.

THE OVAL FACES ENVY

for JC

If along the stairs, your pleas leave, how may I leave
And yet you do ease me into the hope of" reconciling the people with the stones".
Not by nods or rocks, but by the comets you keep beneath your helmet.
So many swallows in your head, and you scaring them from their nest
With your drum, but I am snared by the way you make the smoke
Pass out the jeweler's mouth, while you remain deep inside your pool,
Slurring an almost littoral wrinkle across the surface of the jewel.
A low spark beneath your high heels. Won't you lend me your lungs.
Mine have collapsed beneath the weight of my head.
I will lend you the spike on my helmet while you will take on the property of visibility.
But I take on the hope that smoke makes a finer point.
That opals, ovals and other flights of fancy
Have the weight it will take to bring down at least the visibility of property.
But perhaps, it is all a painstaking nonchalance.
The effect of having taken the pill a little early for an ache that was nothing much.
An ovalness that beats officious like
A defect of nature overturned each spring by the egg.
Blunt as our affectations, but never our affection for the future,
Be it gunmetal gray or one tenacious cave.