



# CLOSE YOUR EYES

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*Argotist Ebooks*

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### **Acknowledgments**

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For Henri Michaux

**CLOSE YOUR EYES**

Close your eyes. There's a silver net in front of a black world. Purple flowers grow in the black. A horizontal bar of light crosses the black.

Silver stalks grow out of the black earth. Light. Just light. A flower of light in the very middle of the black.

Thin silver waterfalls spill over a black cliff. Light bleeds out of sight to the left. The sun shines down through an orange mist.

Silver leaves rise in a slow fountain. Many silver planets twinkle. Purple flowers rise out of sight. A silver tree soars down, then up. Black bats scatter the silver.

Green lily pads with pale yellow flowers cover the surface. Something blinding from above. A silver horizontal bar rises, pulsing. Something blinding.

The sun, at the other end of a valley, shines in my eyes.

A gold mist descends. The left hemisphere is burnished gold. The right is silver, running silver, dripping silver. A white vertical line divides them. A flickering line. A silver gong trembles soundlessly high up on the right. The spiky white light of bombs invades our upper world from below.

This brown is so comforting, soporific. Relax. There's a tiny control panel, deep in all this darkness. One skunk stripe across the darkness. A few brown ducks float in the silver water. The sun's deep in the water. And what if the world becomes yellow, a muddy yellow, with a silver streak, and a tiny black horse's head? And what if it becomes a small silver wheel turning? At the edge of the darkness, there's a silver frost. A silver smudge, like when clouds cover the moon, and you can't see the outline of the moon, just some light.



An orange mountain grows in the middle of this red world. The mast of a sailboat rises against the orange sunset. Yellow invades the orange from above and is repelled. A whiter light shines from the top of the world. Bright yellow wings. (There is a storm in the world, wind blowing the grasses, grasses we'll never see, because we could become sick in them.)

This silver, this muddy silver. Red muddies silver. The red wears away into orange.

The sun is beyond. It's dangerous to look at the sun with your eyes closed. Pure orange, beyond description. A black pyramid. A purple pyramid dissolves in the orange. It turns into a hat. A fat yellow arrow points upward to the right, rises out of sight. Clouds of orange.

Pale yellow, the yellow of chickens, with blood vessels showing right below the skin.

And now a lime-green flower blooms, it turns yellow.

And now, the purple triangle turns into a church, becomes misty, blistered, like one of Monet's paintings of Rouen cathedral. It enlarges.

A purple dog looks down at me, disappears.

Two specks, not obviously a pair, float in the orange water, the sea of fire.

The orange rose is a fireball. The orange fireball is a rose.

The world is gold    afternoon sunlight on the ocean.  
Flakes of light fall like snow.    It's  
snowing flakes of light. The flakes    slow.  
The lightfall lightens.

The world is white. The world is maroon, with a single black speck in the middle. The world is white. The world is maroon, with a pair of black specks falling. The world is white. The world is maroon, with black specks falling. The world is white. The world is maroon. There must be something beyond this.

The world is black, pulsing.

The world becomes so very calm at these moments. A mysterious breeze.

The world is bright red. Are those shadows, faint black shadows? The world is brown. Yellow invades from the upper right.

The world is white. The world is maroon. Two black specks fall, loop to the left. Three black specks, a triangle, fall out of sight.

A silver net hangs on a black wall, the threads so thin. A burst of  
rainbow colors beyond? The world is warm.

Very warm. The world draws sweat out of us. A propeller  
starting, a monoplane at an airfield. The ace. The tomboy. The tomcat.  
What's a tomcat? The world is too warm.

The world is a mess. A weird silver-blue light is emitted from the middle  
of the mess, jagged flashes. A face, or scene, is about to emerge but  
doesn't. The world is confused, everything in motion, I can't tell what  
anything is. A white pyramid of light descends from above. It becomes a  
white mist, it floats down, it settles on the ground and disperses.

The silver net hangs on a black wall, brightening in some parts,  
dimming in others, never very bright. There's light.

It brightens and dims, like the moon behind changing cloud cover.

The world is white. A white rain.  
Splattering on me.

A white box. Pulsing.

The world is black. Seen through a white mist. There might be a white face.  
Clownish. Garish. Black invades from below and quickly blots everything  
out.

Silver. For an instant. Dizzyness.

Brown. Milky brown. Light invades from above. White plants grow tall.

Dull and starry.

Jet black. Through a red mist. An orange mist never takes over. A  
white blur in the black shrinks and disappears. A thin silver geyser sprays  
into the black. This oval is black. Raindrops hit the black water.

A silver crescent, the letter C. A form with a thick inky outline. A white  
mountain range. A puff of white smoke above a house.

A chalky black. Snow drifting down.

Something so red in the black. Through a yellow mist.

The world is a silver mist.  
mist invades from above.

The world is black. A yellow

A black box appears in a gray mist. It expands.

Three yellow candles. A black shape fails to emerge and slips off to the  
right. Half a yellow arch.

Close your eyes. The world is red, white and blue. Sparkling silver.

A gold rain falls during the night. A gold rain falls the next night. A gold mist. An orange light lights up the beach at night.

The world is yellow. Almost too bright. Fat bubbles, fat bubbles of mercury, float upward.

The world is sparkling gold. There's a black cow. A huge black cow.

Gold drizzles down the black window. A gold aura enters from above, pulsing. A yellow river flows across the black earth, from right to left. Call it light. Call it electricity.

The sun rules, yellow and deep brown. Deep, deep brown.

A cloud the shape of a flag. A black crossbow. A sun rising from below ground. It falters. Slips back. A black queen sits on a gold throne. A wispy three-dimensional triangle. Solids made of spiderwebs, like Pevsner or Gabo sculptures. Small white figures, jerky, like an early movie. A white arched window, high up on the right.

An X-ray of a woman wearing a bridal veil. Do people and cats turn white when they're electrocuted? The black waves rise, they rise and rise, making me feel queasy.

The world is orange and black, dense orange and black dots, with something whipping through them, wind or water or an invisible animal.

The world is a dark wood. Sparse grass grows in the black world. It ripples.

A train window at night reflects bottle-green light.

A fountain at night in a lurid light.

A white rectangle blinks, high up on the right. It's instantly blotted out by black. Then an amorphous shape, inkier, disturbing. It trembles, the vague outlines shifting.



The world is pink lemonade swaying. Swaying like ocean water.

Something yellow fails to take shape. Red. A red skirt. Rustling. In the wind.

Folds of gray animal skin. Her yellows and browns were best. Yellow.

Lemon yellow. Lemon.

The world is a fire. A fire has shadows. They grow. A question mark falls through this fire, falls through this orangeade. God drinks this orangeade, I'm sure of it. Three black dots, a triangle, drift down and settle on the bottom. The pale orange is the beginning of the world. A blue truck floats out of the orange.

Vanilla custard is yellow like this. This health never reaches us. Nothing reaches us. The orange world is spattered with red. Yellow decorates. Yellow stabilizes.

Beyond the yellow mist, a faint purple. Light breaks everything and reassembles it as orange clouds with red outlines. An orange ladder descends into our hearts. The ladder turns molten. From the yellow mist, a purple mist rises. Orange pudding. What is orange pudding? I know I've eaten it.

The world is orange, with dark fuzzy edges. The fuzziness takes over. The world is brown. Black hawks fly up to it. A black cloud hangs over it. A musical note floats upward. The world is yellow, blinding. There are four or five tiny bubbles on the edges of this yellow, this yellow quickly passing through orange into brown. A dot falls tearfully, like a worn-out balloon. A dot falls and curves to the left, turns upward. In the bright brownness, or the brown brightness.

Two black dots sit at the top of a burning world. Something hangs down from each of them, like a string from a balloon. The balloons keep floating up and up, but never out of sight, as if bouncing against an invisible ceiling. Things are surprisingly static, an occasional bright thing, dark thing, but the overall color orange or a maroonish brown. For a moment a yellow barge, a fat thing poking into the world from below. But it's so transient, muddying, not clarifying.

The world is yellow, bright yellow. Suddenly blood red. A sort of textured red, with orange seeping through from behind. One black dot trembles in the middle near the top. There's another, larger, just above it. They tremble and rise. Now there's just one, still rising, still rising. A wind blows it into two dots. Rising like the tips of flames, flying into the upper atmosphere. The world is a cooler yellow, with gray behind, and one dot, maroon, stuck in the far left, stuck as the yellow turns to silver.

A starry night, a dim globe of light in the black. Glowing white fish swim through the darkness.

The world is orange. A frightening orange. Black dots bounce like ping-pong balls against the ceiling. The brightness invades from there.

The world is yellow, pale yellow, but threatening to flip to maroon, or lavender. Lavender seeps through the yellow, little clouds of lavender. Black dots bounce away in every direction. A mist of lavender converges in the middle.

A single black dot rises then suddenly curves down and disappears to the left as if that were its plan all along.

Beyond yellow is yellow white. A flowery color. In the end, there are two black dots, one at the top and one at the bottom. In this maroon liquid. There's one black dot, on the right, bouncing off the bottom.

Close your eyes. Two black dots cling to each other. The more the world trembles, the more they cling. The world turns the color of butter.

Bright red powder. The orange world is spattered with bright red. Yellow feathers. Yellow scales. They pale.

A sheer silver fabric hangs in front of a black world.

The world is a giant rose, a black rose with silver edges on its infinite petals.

The black world has faint silver trails that seem to join up with each other but don't lead anywhere, just round and round.

The black is dissolving. The world turns salt and pepper, a most unappetizing pale gray salt.

A pulsing silver bar blocks my vision. The criminal remains anonymous, the detainee anonymous. The bar dissolves,  
back into black.

The world is a silver mist, and beyond black.

The world is a yellow mist, and beyond a silver mist, and beyond black.

The world is a silver mountain, against a black sky. A silver smile. A silver valley, with silver slopes. A silver man carrying a pack.

The world is a starry night, so many stars, stars and stars and stars and stars.

The world is lit by radiation. Half lit. A quarter lit. A sixteenth lit.

The world is a black shadow on a silver screen. What is the world the shadow of? What is the shadow of?

There are gray windows in the lower right. A thin gray window in the center.

Confetti lands softly.

Near a harbor.

The world is black, with a tiny green pattern across the whole surface. I can't make it out.

The world is a silver mist. A small ball spins in the middle.

It's morning, or it's going to be morning.

There's a lime-green corridor  
into the depths of darkness. A narrow corridor.

There's a fire on the water at night. A very pretty fire  
on the water.

The world glitters like Liberace's jacket.

All sorts of purples and blue-grays. I can't tell what's being depicted. There's  
a purple turtle in the middle of the darkness.

Uh oh, a tiny sun is being born, shining, blowing up.

The turquoise trails of invisible objects.

The world has a black whirlpool in the middle. Who can say where it leads?

This question mark.

This minutely tattooed white column. Tilted a little to the left.

A silver mist floats in front of a black world. A black bird towers over me.  
Two silver rivers flow together in the middle.

The silver sun, with delicate threadlike rays, shines  
down from the left. The world sways like ocean water.  
Something struggles to emerge from the silver threads.

An orange stain. An orange stain looks like a continent on the black water. A  
black tree leaps up, the shape of a pitchfork. Africa is outlined in gold leaf.  
Two brown ducks on a black pond. A star flaring up at the bottom.  
A buttocks and thigh.

The world is profoundly dark. But as always, you begin to make out things.  
There's a steep rise, a butte. How will the horsemen ever get up there? Wave  
after wave of black, each inkier than the last, nauseates me. A star flames  
out at the bottom of the world, drowning in the black water.

The black bids us to sit down. There's a comfortable white seat  
made from spiderwebs. White spiderwebs. The material's so  
strong it could hold up a black hole. In  
fact, it does. Two black holes. Just sitting around. The world  
is a curtain of water, a waterfall, with a black cave behind it. Let's try to reach  
that cave. Is there a green in there? A head? A peach pit? And  
if there's a peach pit, shreds of peach?

Instead of a black bird, a gold pyramid stands over me. The gold shines  
through black clouds straight into my eyes. The gold sun—it's gonna do  
something for me, it's gonna take me somewhere. A train hurtles across a  
narrow gorge. A train hurtles above a threadlike waterfall.  
A Hawaiian waterfall.

The windows of the upper storey are brown. Black butterflies with lime  
outlines fill the sky, collide with each other. Gold shapes, puzzle pieces,  
float away. The road begins gold, but soon blackens. Soon we  
don't know where the road is. There's a glowing, pinkish-white boulder  
along the road. A skyline of sorts, a translucent skyline. The gold light  
shone on her and turned her into a chicken. The silhouettes of  
people talking.



The world is silver, trembling. A steep black mountain rises up. This  
 mountain won't help us. The world is muddy. Mud. Featureless.

The world is smooth today. Uniform.

Somewhere, there is light. But it doesn't make much headway here.

The world is featureless. It gives us nothing.  
 Nothing to talk about.  
 Nothing to see today. Perhaps that's the point.

But wait, are those bushes at the edge of the darkness? Radiating their shape,  
 their curved tops? I guess not. Once again, the sense of light coming  
 from above. But it doesn't illuminate anything. Not a single  
 object. It just seeps into the darkness.

The world is a silver mist with lines cutting through it, a  
 spiderweb at night.

Sometimes, the world reminds me of a spiderweb, and we are flies caught in it.  
 Not knowing we're caught until we can't deceive ourselves any longer.

Smoke rises at night, listlessly. The fire died down a long time ago.

I sense trees in the darkness, with white flowers. Small trees in the darkness  
 with white flowers.

The world is frosted, frost covering a window. The world is the color of  
 dust. The world is dust. In the middle of this charcoal world, a black dot  
 grows and shrinks,  
 grows and shrinks. It looks like an ink blot.

The world is orange. There's a black dot in the orange, falling, falling to the bottom. It bounces on the bottom, a low bounce. Two more black dots. They don't fall. They drift down and then leap up, drift down and leap up, all the while staying at the same height. The third ball at the bottom does the same.

Now the three balls at different levels fall and bounce, fall and bounce. Everything we see is falling and bouncing. The world continuously falls and bounces, falls and bounces.

The world is orange. A black dot drops like a stone.

The world is watermelon red, with a slightly shapeless rectangle in the middle, dusty brown. It's gone now. Only watermelon red. There's one black dot, which bounces close to the top, close to the very top. It's gone, flown away.

Now the world is the most inviting creamy orange, the orange of a creamsicle, my mother's favorite Good Humor. And there are two black dots, one at the top and one in the middle, and they seem to be connected by the thinnest black thread.

The world is black, with yellow radiating from the upper left. The world is black, with many yellow threads hanging down. A few yellow threads run crosswise. Surely, the yellow threads are going to become something. They're going to grow into something. They swell into bushes, tall hedges. The yellow will make something of itself. But this silver, this silver, soon gives way to gold flashes on black water. There's a vague silver object in the middle of the water.

The world is black. Silvery black. Muddy black. Two club-like objects at the top. Bright yellow, with orange edges. There's a black object in the middle of the orange world, a torso. Brown mold eats it away. The world is charcoal gray. A maroon object, a profile, tries to emerge in the upper left, but it never does, and slowly drifts out of sight, very slowly. The charcoal gray turns, in slow increments, lime green. There's a V-shaped turquoise in the middle of the black, a turquoise vase.

The world is yellow, custard yellow, very alluring. There are some black dots around. They stay at the top and bottom. The yellow is turning to orange juice. Lemon juice and orange juice. There is something black or purple—yes, purple—that tries to emerge, but it doesn't try very hard, and it doesn't emerge.

The world is bright orange, royal orange. There's a black dot in the center, and a small tear nearby. And both are drifting to the right. The world is blue and green. They're drifting into light green. The dot moves around in the center, but that's all, it's not going anywhere. It never goes far.

The world is this white yellow, this eggnog yellow. There's a round purple object with jagged edges at the top of the yellow. It's out of sight. The yellow turns to watermelon, then back toward yellow.

This is not what I wanted, but it too is good. This is yellow, with a trace of black mixed into it. There's a black ball high up on the right that wants to go somewhere, that wants to slash toward the center,  
but it can't, it's restrained by invisible ties.

This world is white, a dark white. Is that possible? Is black mixing into this white? Is maroon? Is orange?

The world is yellow, gold, orange, blinding. Two black dots are swept along from left to right, fade out. Yellow stripes the orange. There's something out of control on the left, a pulsing vertical object. It seems to have a yellow and blue aura. A pulsing candlestick. And now orange, fringed in black and white, lies on top of me. There's a black dot below the middle. Everything turns black. Everything turns orange. Crimson. There are four or five black dots. They like to lurk along the edges. Everything turns black.

The world is white. The world is lemon meringue. And that's how it stays, for a long time. Still this beautiful lemon white, the lemon white of certain roses, certain ice cream, certain light.

There's a black dot in the middle of the orange, orangeade orange. The orange turns to brown, which turns to blue, and a black dot floats at the very bottom.

The world is half bright red and half dull black, a right half and a left half, a jigsaw-puzzle border between them. Now it's yellow on the left and black on the right. And soon it's all muddy brown, orange showing through, a black dot rising with the flames, rising, rising, getting smaller, still in view, still in view, drifting to the right.

The world is yellow, with a black dot in the middle, falling. Not falling out of view. Lingered just above the bottom. Sometimes bouncing up, a little. Being pushed up by a kind of hair along the bottom. An eyelash?

The world is purple with a big yellow hole in the middle. The world is raining blue, raining green, yellow. A black dot in the middle drops to the bottom. The world is purple with an orange object in the middle. It's all orange now. Orange shading into yellow.

The world turns crimson, blood red. Brown rises from below, purple-tinged brown, taking over everything. There's a black dot in the lower left, where the *green* appears, and now the *green*, with some blue, pushes through everything, and now light blue pushes through.

The world is olive green, with a yellow vertical bar on the right, a yellow horizontal bar on the bottom. Bright orange, blood orange, with two dots moving frenetically high up on the right. Real jumping jacks.

The left half is maroon and the right half orange. They're divided by a vertical line, a fuzzy area between the two colors. This is what Rothko painted, isn't it? This is the surface of the sun, things bubbling out, leaping out. That's what we see, the surface of the sun.

The world is gold, blinding. It feels like something might come out of the middle, but nothing does. There are four black dots in the orange. One of them has

a long hair trailing from it. The dots don't move much. The orange turns to gold. The dots leap up. Now there are three dots. They don't

move much. Quietly, the world turns yellow, tapioca, very soft. There are a few black dots in the pudding. But they're not very

pronounced. The world is lemon yellow, delectable. The world is candy-apple red, with a few flaws. A few dots trembling. The world turns

the color of punch. The color of certain apples. Of certain paintings. The upper half orange, the lower half red, with a black dot in the red, just below the dividing line. The world is custard yellow, but a mist of blood red seeps in

from below. Orange punch. Blood orange. Bright orange, blinding orange, overpowering orange. A few dark smudges, especially in the middle. Smudges that want to be the footprints of tiny animals. A dark mass, a dark fog, purple fog, is rising up, rising up, radiating. A mountain. The world is lemon yellow again. The left half is lemon yellow. The right half a cloudy purple. The purple engulfs everything. The world is yellow, a sweet yellow.

The world is pure yellow, not too bright, not sweet and inviting. With veins of pale blue.

The world is many overlapping silver window frames looking out on black.

The world is black. A silver mist forms on the black window. A sketchy silver horse rides toward us. A silver flower opening. Silver hair spreads out in the water. The silver will be silver in this shadowy room on a gloomy afternoon. I see a person I once knew. Flaring nostrils. Someone from Little League.

The world is mostly black. Black granite with tiny red pockmarks, static on the surface. The side of the world is made of black granite. Nothing is carved on it. It's smooth now. Nothing emerges from it. If anything, it must be approached. It doesn't approach. In the gloom, I perceive a tree that was chopped down, shoots coming out of the stump. Energetic. You can hardly see the stump anymore. On the other side of this black water, there's a bright light. The water blackens. There's an area of pure black, which enlarges and shrinks, enlarges and shrinks. But, if anything, it's shrinking overall. Far out in that black, somewhere far out in that black, across a prairie, there are fireworks. This blue being, this purple being, flies around the landscape. Is it Krishna? It's taken a long time for this blue-gray being to emerge.

The world is still black and gray, or black and silver. It's been that way the whole time. So uninteresting. Black with silver swirls, silver mist.

Now there's a silver burst in the lower part of the world. Where are those balloons and balls falling? What happened to them? Nothing happens. Nothing happens anymore.

The world is black, with orange sparkles. A black sky filled with stars. A depth of stars. A trembling circle in the middle. And larger concentric circles coming out of it.

The world is black. Blacker and blacker in the center. Horizontal lines of charcoal barely distinguishable. Black is best, pure black, but it's hardly possible.

The world is black. Raked by light from above on the right, and then the left.

The world is black, with a vague mask floating along the bottom. A large clump of dust. A large mud stain. A cloudiness in the bottom of a glass. A cloudiness billowing upward, muddying the world.

The world is black, with sunny billows floating up and away. Billows with orange auras.



The world is gold, gold sparkling on a black or red background. Gold sparkling on a black background, which is itself on a black background.

The world is orange, with a precipice at the top. A black precipice. Black water arching down. A black cataract.

Each constellation of small stars is a different insect, creeping along the ground, the yellow ground.

Gold alps stand against a black sky, trembling.

The gold letters are unreadable, breaking up against the black,  
turning into gold mist. A dark green garment hangs down, black in the  
middle. A dark gray garment hangs down, black in the middle.



Close your eyes. The world is gold, flashing.

Fish scales in the sun. The world is not beginning. The world is yellow. The world is the inside of a mango. The world is no place we've ever been, except during lovemaking. The world is no place we've ever been.

The world is black, covered with this yellow static. Light shines down on the black from the right. As it crosses down to the left, it warps. The light is warping, right there. And then over there, the light warps. The world is a dark alley through trees, an increasingly dark alley. We never reach the end of it, because it leads into the past, into a place in a painting 150 years ago.

The world is yellow, very warm, very inviting, not intense. A soft yellow, maybe a powdery yellow and black. A spiderweb should look like this. A spiderweb could look like this. A spiderweb at the right time.

The world is going to be black now, at least for a moment. Before the giant letters of billboards. Before the raccoon face, the panda face, emerging like a rose from the muddy purple-gray-black background. Light shines into this world. I'm not sure from where. Light falls on me, in several ways.

Light falls across light. Light falls on me. Light does fall. Light is cheerful. Light is pastel. Light is a golf course, tennis courts, a pool, a clubhouse, a dining room, the lunch specialties. Light is lurid, as in early Giulio Romano. Light brings out only the most iridescent colors in the darkness.

The world is black, with a dab of custard yellow, like a custard yellow sweater hanging over a chair, at the very bottom. A yellow translucent fish, a ghost fish, feeding at the bottom.

The world is a blizzard at night. So much white powder, white powder as fine as sugar or salt, falling out of the dark blue. Powder, arching over us.

The world is tired. Black and white going in different directions. The salt-and-pepper world is tired. This gray pudding won't be eaten today.

The world is alternately blinding and not. The surface has the texture of a huge white oak. The world is the sun shining on tree bark. The surface of the world is tree bark.

The world is black with silver dots. The world is covered with silver powder. A black shape, indistinct beyond the gray powder. The black shape a horse jumping. In the middle of the black, with faint silver highlights, a bear's head, a werewolf's head, a cat's head.

The world is black. The letter H, a large gold letter H,  
trembles.

A silver sun tries to break through.

Within every black, there's silver, threads of silver, curlicues of silver. Blue  
clouds float at different levels in the black sky, in the black sky below us.

The world is black, a droopy light shining through it. A coppery, droopy  
light.

We are, each of us, living in this unreal world. Is this true darkness? Almost.  
There are impossible-to-follow blue trails, squiggles, I don't know what,  
within the black.

A picture can take our breath away. The eyes.

The world is black, with bewitching blue sparkles. Acrobats swirl through that mist. A white mountaineer ascends in the upper right.

The world is green and purple and silver and black, and maroon, and maybe the light of a train is entering.

The world is sparkling silver, rustling silver, silver shading on the right into black, which spreads and takes over. But no, the silver holds its own below. Intensifies into white as its space narrows. And now, it is pushed out of sight. The world is all black, muddy black, gray black.

The world is a tunnel of overarching trees, a sunlit hillside in the distance.

The world is sparkling silver, silver and black. A silver web across black skyscrapers against a blue-black sky. A black, tattered spiderweb against the blue-black sky. The web is alive. Maybe the reflection of a web in moving water. The blue-black sky seems to push it away, parting it. Or something else is parting it.

Silver bubbles float up from a purple-black world, white bubbles.

The world is coal-black with a green gray web ... I don't know ... tattered cloth ... hanging down. Things lighten. There are these molten silver objects. Birds, beings, cracked beings, reflected in water.

The sun striping a mountain pool.

The world is a pale orange square. A pale orange square at the top of the world, in the middle, disappearing. Now there's this black depth, with green static. This is where worlds are born, or where they're not quite born, they don't rise to that. And so, a milky white engulfs everything, and black tries to engulf that, and the white curdles into little bits of milk in the black liquid of the world.

The world is a young white oak, reaching out to me with many arms, in a dusky wood.

There are these columns of light, columns of light coming down into the wood, very thin, filaments. It's like living under a giant jellyfish or man o' war.

The world is a shining yellow, a blinding yellow, yellow turning gold, turning dusky. Brown sprinkled with yellow dust. The yellow of static.

Yellow sparklers landing on white picnic blankets.

We have a black night in front of us. And around us. And above us. But not below us. Below us, more picnic blankets on the grass, more people sitting, and a dark mass of trees at the bottom, before the street, and the creek, and the ballfields.

The world has the perfect amount of chrome catching the streetlights. Illuminating the street corner. The little traffic circle.

The world is a crystal globe, a crystal chandelier, like in an old-fashioned catering hall. O those places were nice, they had nice desserts, they had cream pies. You could almost eat the chairs, the columns, the wallpaper. The whole place was meant to be eaten.

The world is sunlit. The sun floods down from the right.  
A cranberry orange.

The world looks like fruit punch, dark around the edges. The sky is the color  
of fruit punch. That would make most people happy.

The world is a multicolored cat's face, pointillist. A painting by Klee?

Horse-drawn carts cross the field.

The world is big blue bat, a big blue bird.

The world is a blue-black outline, frightening. Batman. Against a green sun,  
in an olive-green sky.



The world is black, with yellow shadows, yellow mists, in the upper right.

Light struggles to enter this world. It  
 can't make inroads. Light rolls off, runs off, runs down our black world,  
 shaken off the way water is shaken off animals.

Light blooms on the black world, without changing it.

The world is orange-tinted, raspberry-tinted, a black mountain with a raspberry  
 top. A black mountain and raspberry-colored waves  
 radiating from behind the mountain. A raspberry sun behind the top of a  
 black mountain.

The world is black, with a bright white amoeba in the upper right. It blurs,  
 fades out, there's no trace of it.

There are traces of light in the black, shadows of light that blow across the  
 black, thin clouds of light rising in the black. White smoke rises slowly up  
 the black sky. White smoke, from many sources along the ground. The smoke  
 that keeps rising, days after a bombing.

The world is black. Light seeps in from below.

Silver static trembles in front of a black world. There's a large yellow N tilting to the right. It looks like a burning, toppling building. The world is two silver potbellies pushing up against each other.

The world is black, with gold static dancing on top. A light tries to shine through, from behind. And mostly fails. The world is the black that contains the loveliest blues. What is that? Teal blue? No, it's deeper than that.

The world is light gray. A light is trying to shine through. Various greens—snot greens—proliferate. The world is black, with various light greens lurking within. Winning greens.

The world is black, with blue glitter. It stays like that, black with blue glitter. And because the blue glitters, there is yellow. And because there is black, there is red, or at least a sense of red.

The world is tired. If not the world, I am tired. Light leaks in from below the world. Light leaks into the bottom of the world.

The world is black, with a large tan image, or shadow, flickering in its depths.

The world is black, with green and yellow and blue sparkles, rainbow sparkles, rising to the right. Like the shadow of flames.

The world is yellow. Crisscrossed by food fights. With odd depths. The world has more dimensions than usual.

The world is black, with a small circle bathed in yellow near the middle, yellow and black brushstrokes. A black object in the lower half of the world is surrounded by a squiggly blue aura, perhaps several auras. The world is black and yellow.

The world is black with yellow glitter blowing across.

The light is not the surface of the sun. It's ambient light.

Stray light. Much-bounced light. It's been around. It's bounced around. It's the light and shade, the fire and shadow, that give the appearance of life to inanimate things. The eye bounces between bright flame and dark shadow, and things seem to move.

A blue mist floats in front of a black world.                      A mist of faint stars.

The blue mist                      doesn't change much. Occasionally                      milkier.  
But nothing emerges from it. A gray cloud seems to form in the middle. But  
becomes nothing.

The black,                      the blue mist, make me sleepy. The blue mist becomes a mist of  
light. There's a bright dot high up on the right.                      Briefly.

Light invades the black world from below. There are bursts of light, bursts of  
blue light.

The world is black, with a fire burning in the middle, in the distance. The  
world is black, with a gold clash in the middle. A "clash of civilizations"? A  
gold mist floats in front of a black world. Overlapping panes of gold mist.  
The world is black, with a pallid amoeba in the middle. It dissolves. The  
world is black, with a succession of explosions in the middle. The world is  
made of gold foil rippling in breezes.

A beautiful purple light takes over the black. A purple that doesn't exist in  
nature, except maybe a few flowers. There's a bright star in the middle of the  
purple that gets brighter and brighter without enlarging, and then dissolves.

The world is black, behind a blue mist,                      pulsing, trembling.

A silver mist floats in front of a black world. So black. A  
 thicker silver mist radiates outward from this black center. The black  
 world beyond. Pure black.  
 Maybe the color of molasses. It has some  
 depth. Some brown. But black has more depth than brown, doesn't it?  
 Lemon yellow swirls into the black, but remains an arch high  
 up on the left.

The world is yellow and brown. A big ship moving away from me. A lion—  
 or a tiger—just standing in the sun. This yolky area at the top of the  
 world. It glistens, surrounded by gray, gray and black mist, smoldering or  
 flashing like some paintings by Rembrandt. Lurid. Not lurid.  
 The luridness of gold. Gold cloth. Gold  
 brocade.

The world is black, with a yellow tree. With a yellow dance. With a yellow  
 sun. Trying to burn through clouds. But never getting far. A blinding  
 speck at most. And then, swallowed up, the way the moon gets swallowed up.  
 You can tell where it is from the brightness of the clouds, and then the  
 brightness becomes dispersed, and you can no longer tell.

The world is black, with great depth. Milky light seeps in from the left, and  
 soon covers the entire world except far down on the right.

The world is black, but not flat. The world is flat, but not black.  
 The world is flat, and black. The world is black, and flat. Only the first  
 of those propositions is true at the moment.

The world is blue-black, with a yellow glow above and beyond the mountain  
 range. The world is black, with a dark green hook, an artificial hand,  
 reaching out. The world is a television station, a shopping strip, the upper  
 stories of a white suburban house in the sun. In the center of the black world is  
 a small, bright yellow face, with big, bright yellow lips, talking. I can't hear  
 what it's saying except that it's serious, and mean, and  
 demands attention. And then, concentric circles, yellow rings, radiating  
 outward from it. And then, demonic faces, robotic faces, in a yellow  
 wash, over white paper. There are so many trees in this darkness, mature  
 trees, and underbrush mostly removed, the way it's supposed to be in a  
 French forêt.

The world is black, with yellow high up on the right. A large  
 yellow man is wearing a brown coat, which he takes off. A bird head. A baby  
 chicken's head, with brown feathers, black feathers. Neon radiates out of a  
 woman's eye, out of her left eye. Silver, and pink, and blue.

I'm seeing a vision  
 now, it's like a movie—it's literally moving—of a landscape out West, pale  
 blue sky, a few clouds. I'm seeing it out the window of a moving

vehicle. It's exactly like a movie, for ten seconds. Now, I'm not  
seeing it, it's all dark.

Close your eyes. The world is black. Thickly sown with dim stars.

The world is unchanging. There's something called sleep in this monotony. Light infiltrates the darkness without amounting to anything. Light muddies the darkness. Nothing emerges. The light doesn't amount to much. A house at a crossroads in the desert. The light doesn't amount to much. A memory of driving north on the Garden State Parkway at night, under the Irvington Ave. and Springfield Ave. overpasses. The light doesn't amount to much, except sleep.



The world is a black sunburst. Black light glittering  
 against a sky of trembling stars, thickly sown, dim.

An orange tree pulses in the night. A crucifixion. The man's dead. A  
 plane's wing bursts into flames, not far above ground.

Looking across a river, at this dusky hour, I can almost see the  
 trees on the other side. And the telephone poles. And a galleon, reflected in  
 the river.

The river becomes a lake, with a mountain rising on  
 the other side. A yellow ladder arches into a black hole, an animal's open  
 mouth, a frightened animal's open mouth, a dead animal's open mouth.

So many little fires burn. Burning candles cover the top of a table. Their  
 smoke becomes an orange cloud in the black. There is a large  
 hole at the top of the world, and yellow smoke is billowing down into the  
 black. The world is suddenly so much sunnier.

Sunlit green, the sun on the edge of the  
 woods.

In the black night, cars drive toward me, with muffled headlights. Here's a  
 truck, with its headlights off. The cars and trucks are coming out of a  
 tunnel. I feel sure they're going to steer to my right and avoid me. A car heads  
 toward me, on this foggy night, its headlights muffled. The trees soak up  
 some of its light. The low leaves are incandescent orange. There's a  
 blinding flash.

Now,

I'm under a wedding tent, at night, in summer. A white trolley pulls  
 up. A woman gets out, walks confidently in the sunlight across the tracks,  
 bubbling.

High in the gray darkness, there's a tiny, deep blue window, with a bright  
 yellow star at the top. On top of the buildings, there are yellow  
 ladders, thin but sturdy. On top of the houses,  
 peaked roofs with slippery fishtail shingles. A large, pale  
 blue house, behind two big trees, its second floor bigger than its first floor.  
 And now, I begin to fade. Even  
 though the world takes on the colors of early Giulio Romano. Flame-  
 lit cliffs, fire-lit cliffs. The light of a fire reverberates off  
 the cliffs. The caves are ink. The cave mouths are black ink.

We are insects in our command of this space. Dragonflies in our  
 command of space. Birds in our command of space.

There's an orange and yellow bird, in the dark night.  
 Indeterminately lit.

The world is a curtain of stars. A curtain of light bubbles. Turquoise, aquamarine bubbles, so minute, like an erotic sketch.

There's an animal sitting high up in a tree, where there's still light left from the sunset, a small animal, about the size of a head, a face. Yawning. Screaming. Demonic. Sly. It looks like an archbishop's hat.

There's a slit in the red, rocky hillside for machine guns. The face of a tadpole, with eyes and mouth of light. The grass blades are made of light. The spiderwebs are made of light.

A woman is talking in the middle of a large group of people on the shore. Everyone listens until her head turns into a horse's head, and all the other heads turn into horses' heads, and then they fog out, like the people in Bocchioni's "Stati d'animo." This is one of the last places lit by the sun today. The thoughtless light. Gray velvet touched by yellow light.

Decorated with pinpoints of light. Leaves, gold leaves. Burning leaves. Gold hands, burning hands. The flaming hands are never consumed, they never hurt. Her hands seem to be in flames.

The world is black, with bright red trying to pierce through from behind, red spikes of light, like reflections on water at night.

The world is a mix of yellow and brown, inviting. Warmer than usual, warmer to us. Metal rings hang from a black wall. Nothing comes toward us. We feel ourselves narrow. Our frame of reference narrow. Our field of vision narrow. Narrowed into a line that stretches far behind us.

They look like people in a photo from 40 years ago, unreal. Their exact faces are unreal. People actually are not like this anymore.

The world sways, dances. The shadow of all this light sways. Like an evergreen.

Flares in the night. Yellow, with a blue edge.

Pink flowers want to break through the black. Break open. And they do. And they almost do. Pink. Soft. Peonies. Pink peonies.

The world is a reflecting pond at night. The pond has grays. And thus, whites. Have you ever noticed at night how all the available light will sometimes collect on a single object? A single low flare lights up the ground. Like a sunlamp. Like the sunlamp my brother Stephen used on the third floor of our house 40 years ago. What of that still exists? Not my brother, not the sunlamp, not our family. Only the house.

Close your eyes. There's light. Clouds of light. Each cloud made of countless tiny balls of light. Sometimes the clouds of light surge at us. They stain us. They enhance our breathing.

The world is a night scene by Giulio Romano. The world narrows us. Narrows us to the width of our nose. Narrows us into sheets of steel plate. The world turns into white icing, lemon icing, whipped cream, spilling down. Spindrift, spilling down. Like a long white beard, spilling down.

The world is black and white, black and gold. Some people wear gold hats in the restaurant booths.

The world is black, releasing a silver mist. A mist of silver stars, none distinct,  
 none pinpointable. A trace of blue, blue-black, burns through the middle.

It doesn't lead anywhere.

Jagged mountain peaks at  
 night. Depths on the right. I don't know  
 what causes them. Grassy humps in the sun.

The sun invades, the sun breaks through the  
 world's defenses. The light kindles certain leaves, certain branches. The light  
 flows in through pipes. I can see it making a turn in a right-angle pipe.

The world is a yellow explosion, turning orange, then red, as it radiates outward. One black dot floats, in the middle. A second black dot appears in the upper left, and flows out of sight. We don't know when this is going to end.

The world whitens, but only so much, and then blackens, but only so much. It reaches a muddy black, a greenish black, even a whitish black. The world whitens, but only so much, and then blackens, but only so much. At the top of the world, sunlight reasserts itself. The sunlight is going to enter us. It stretches us out. Lays us out to dry. To dry straight. To be easily transportable.

A capful of lemon yellow has been poured into the liquid air. Enriched, the air turns the color of orange juice, warm orange juice.

The world is bright orange, pure orange, as orange as can be. The sun is too bright now to continue.

The world is purple, or orange, or maybe purple with orange bleeding in from behind. There are three black dots, near the top. Without fanfare, one falls to the bottom and disappears. The second one drifts down toward the middle. Somehow, the purple becomes an arch that opens into more purple. There are four dots—a triangle and one dot out on its own. There are many dots, but most important, a pair of dots in the middle, that move in tandem with my breathing, or blinking, or heartbeat. One dot near the top has a long tail, like a comma, or a spermatozoa. The end of the tail becomes hairlike. There's another one, with such a long tail, the tail is ten times as long as the dot. They're like tiny black balloons, with long strings, floating.

What more do we need to see?

The world is lemon yellow, with a few black dots, spread-out dots. They don't move much. They rise up and down a little, with the breeze, or with my breathing. In the middle of this yellow world, there's a clot, a ball of yellow hair, a tangle of yellow hair. A flower wants to form in the center.

Inside the yolk of a fertilized egg. One of the bouncing dots has grown a long hairlike tail again. It bounces, or bounds, at the bottom of the world. The yellow reddens, pinkens. There's a bright red hole in the center. The color of Hawaiian Punch, hard to take seriously.

There are countless stars against a black sky. The stars join up, forming a spiderweb, a net. It stays like that. For some reason, it makes me think of scrambled eggs. There's a shadowy narrative I can't quite put my finger on, taking place in this trembling, starry sky. Like the scenes you can observe in the dark areas between flashes of moonlight on the ocean.

The night is streaked with silver. Moving silver.

The world is black, with endless stars, a film of stars, a dirty film of stars. Each star is a muddy snowflake. Each star is a gothic letter, too dim and smudged to read.

The world is a sieve of light. Light sprinkles through a million holes. A million needles of light. The world is dark gray, with lighter areas within, where galaxies seem to come into existence or fly apart. It's all very hard to say. It's all very hard to see. This part of the universe is not so illuminated. The world is almost black. But I know the light will never wholly disappear.

The world gives me nothing today. The world gives next to nothing. A memory of a fruit and vegetable market on Putnam Ave. in Cambridge, on the walk home to 141 Western Ave. 30 years ago. That's what the world gives, next to nothing, a random happy moment. The world giveth.

The world is black, behind a faint cloud of light that tries to thicken, but doesn't succeed, and so the light remains scattered, shattered, translucent islands floating in the black. That is perhaps the answer: Light is an island in darkness.

Light fractures into an infinite number of islands floating in darkness. Light floats in a black ocean. Light rises out of a black ocean.

The world is almost black. Light barely filters through, and don't ask me how it filters through. Light filters through everywhere, but so little light. Light filters through everywhere, but so little light.

Why is there light at all? Why is there darkness? Why is there God? Why is there the devil?

There's a cloud of light in front of the black. A film of light. Like a film of dust, lying on the black. No colors tonight, just light and darkness, no colors at all, not one. Or perhaps yellow and black. *The Yellow and the Black*, a novel.

The world is black. The world is black for now.



## About the Author

Michael Handler Ruby is a poet and journalist who lives in Brooklyn. He is the author of six other full-length poetry books, including [Compulsive Words](#) (BlazeVOX, 2010), [American Songbook](#) (Ugly Duckling, 2013) and [The Mouth of the Bay](#) (BlazeVOX, 2018). His trilogy in prose and poetry, *Memories, Dreams and Inner Voices* (Station Hill, 2012), includes ebooks [Fleeting Memories](#) (UDP, 2008) and [Inner Voices Heard Before Sleep](#) (Argotist Ebooks, 2011).

He is also the author of the echapbooks *Titles & First Lines* (Mudlark, 2018) and [First Names](#) (Mudlark, 2004), and four Dusie Kollektiv chapbooks, including [The Star-Spangled Banner](#) (2011) and [Foghorns](#) (2014).

He co-edited Bernadette Mayer's collected early books, [Eating the Colors of a Lineup of Words](#) (Station Hill, 2015). Recordings of three of his books, two performances and an hour-plus 2004 interview are available at [PennSound](#). Recordings of three other books are archived at [WFMU](#). Recent interviews can be found in [Rob McLennan's Blog](#), [Brooklyn Poets](#) and on [WGXC](#).

A graduate of Harvard College and Brown University's writing program, he works as an editor of U.S. news and political articles at *The Wall Street Journal*.