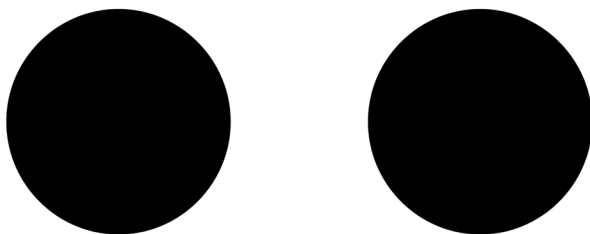


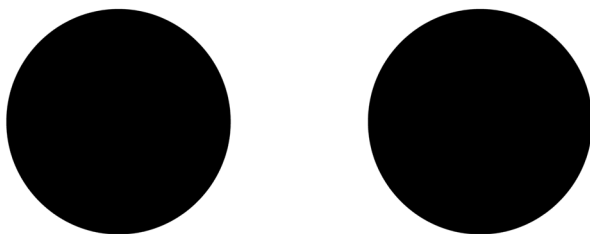
GHOST MACHINE BY BEN MIROV





Winner, 2009 CAKETRAIN CHAPBOOK COMPETITION

MICHAEL BURKARD, *Final Judge*



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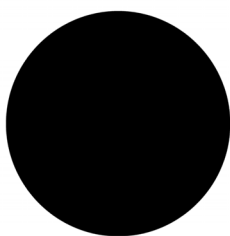
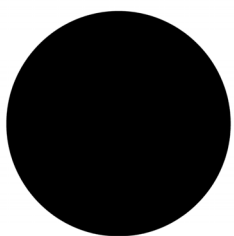
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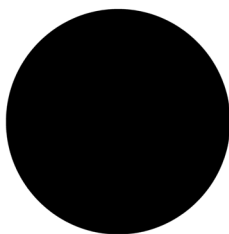
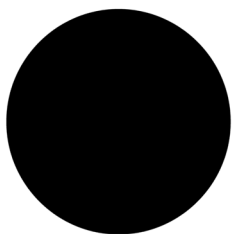
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for C

The ghosts the poems were written for are
the ghosts of the poems. We have it second-
hand. They cannot hear the noise they have
been making.

—Jack Spicer



GHOST OF A MORNING
AFTER YOU LEFT ME

I hover in front of a chain link fence for hours reading signs. My day is a long protracted silence. I pour myself into a phone call to avoid a little rain. Wind comes through a crack in the glass. They put new lights in the basilica months ago, I didn't notice. I program a future version of myself to remember a face slick with seawater, ringed with wet hair. The message is sent back with nothing inside. I can't believe my life was like this three years ago. I would have sex and just lie there, thinking about things I had to do. I woke up in a grocery store. I was buying broccoli.

GHOST RECEPTOR

The knowledge of my receivers grows dim.
I can only misquote what the voice tries to say.
I put it down in little marks.
I tell Meric it makes me sad.
I tell Dan I'm wiser now.
My head is full of *Love Is Chemicals*.
I'm sleeping on a couch.

GHOST LIFE

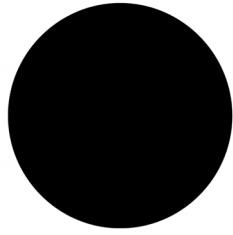
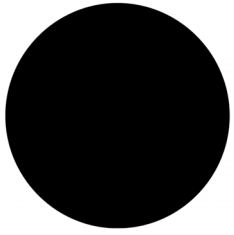
I'm living in a dream where a woman has a blurry face. Other people consider themselves Warriors fans. I look at a plastic bottle. I try to get more references. My new place will have hardwood floors. I'll boil Tom some water. I can't tell the portal what's on my mind. I talk with my mom about what's getting me down. I change *love poem* to *move pole*. I take BART to Oakland. I think of others as dots.

SPACECASE

I come to a rain condenser in the shape of Erin. It's almost dark outside. I can't stand taking naps too late. Is this how literary characters escape? Friends fall through my poems in search of new life. We go to the roof and put a blanket on Victor. I search his head for something to do. I remember how to carry a snare drum. Logan gets a stamp on my inner-right wrist. I can't sit still or eat my lamb.

SAME GHOST

I walk through love with a mannequin's arm. Things are the same as they were two weeks ago. It's a cool idea to have the woman eat the man made of dreams. I act like myself at a coffee shop and try not to shake. My bed is an ear that cannot record. I can't hear the voice that shifts through the barriers. She pukes in my shower and falls asleep. I switch *cheesesteak* for *burrito* and feel the same. Her boyfriend's name is something else.



GHOST OF ONE SUMMER NIGHT

Thanks for coming to 12 Galaxies.
I'm not calling the Vampire anymore.
I can't keep thinking of August.
You don't have to drink about the boat.
You don't have to take off your pants.
Sorry about the boots on your bed.
I just want a job with an income.
I go down on the breeze.
The earlobe is wet.

NAMELESS GHOST

Validation comes on the dance floor in waves.

I see them through a lens high above.

I imagine a woman in a room with Fleetwood Mac.

I read the email to see what she saw.

I do it to kill time and nothing else.

At 4 AM you must exist.

GHOST (1 : 4 2 AM)

My ideas are boring. She bleeds on the sheets. The wind blows over pavement and into an ear. If you park on Valencia, you may get a ticket. I erase her from the poem about the park. There are fifteen pages left in the life experience. Is this a good place to sleep? The spirit world shifts behind me. There's coffee on my shirt, not blood. I can't absorb information on a bench in Dolores. I had a dream we were in a hotel. Your blonde friend was faceless. She offered me salsa.

MY LIARS

I spend all day looking at other people's writing. Is this a blithe gash that was intended? I grab a case of Bud. He hits me in the head and I turn around. I see *Taquiera* in red neon. Flying over the city, Jared lets me steer. I can't try on jackets anymore. Even though I know she's not the one, I think of us on a bike. I can't catch Joseph and Bella jumps on my back and this means something. I cut up missionary pamphlets to make a collage. Waiting in the morning for my hair to look right, I feel like shit. My work is an obvious cloud. Every door in the cloud is locked. Eating with the kids, I tell them nothing about my life. Later, a man named Malcolm calls.

FILLMORE GHOST

I arrive late and I don't buy a drink. I keep my hands in my pockets and bob. I look around for strangers. Some lights are on. Some are flickering. Andy tells me about his surfing trip and I wince. There are no thoughts anywhere. She arrives and I can't remember her name and she kisses me. The last three songs are dim. I can't find an ATM. I throw the poster in the trash. My pants are covered in beer.

SAMPLE EDITS

We work in a room with the blinds down. You can eat pizza all the time. I remember swimming in the ocean with her. I pass a yellow cable over the coffee. Two weeks and she touched me there. Crossing the Bay is thinking time. Cigarettes are tiny men, not women. I bet you're cold. We make out against some graffiti. Poems can't be typed. Other times, I wonder what he's like in bed. I buy noodles at midnight. Couples on the street piss me off, then make me happy. What's your trick for going to sleep?

DOLORES PARK GHOST

We have plans to meet in a shadow.
We sit in the park for an hour.
Someone hands me their homework.
A little hand grabs my throat.
My kids fall asleep in dirty t-shirts.
I'm sorry about your crush.
I'm smashed after three drinks.

GHOST CHAPTER

I replace *Hot Lesbian Sandwich* with *Elements Taken from Trees*.

My shoes are somewhere beneath the couch.

I push my face into a memory.

I dream of *Where Is Juan Gris* in a pipe filled room.

I think of myself in different city.

I'm wearing a blue hoodie.

My hair falls in my eyes in a fashionable way.

I begin to write *after the wave*.

SAN FRANCISCO OVER CLOUDS

I stand on a roof that doesn't belong to me. I write three letters to her in my head. I get nervous about dating. My unborn sister should hand me the key. Leah calls and giant moths fly around in a book. One stands to the side with gold chains on his neck. Dan keeps my mind in a wet towel. I wish I could get the cube off my chest. The best way to proceed is to disconnect. I can't finish my aloo palak. I fill my drinks with hands. I promise to be a wedding date.

SLEEPLESS NIGHT GHOST

I go to a shop where they sell machines that keep you up.
People flow in and out of the infrastructure like haywire birds.
It doesn't matter what I say to the recording device. Nothing
can save the face blowing across the face. Someone catches me
and shoves enough wire through my dream. Someone getting
out of bed to the sound of someone showering. Someone eating
pieces in the dark. It scares me through another night with no
ideas. I need artificial clouds to give. If we are ever in a car
together, I hope light pours through the windshield. I plan to
be another language in the body of a deer.

Ben Mirov is the author of the chapbooks *Collected Ghost* (H_NGM_N, 2009) and *I is to Vorticism* (New Michigan Press, 2010). He is general editor of *pax americana*. He is also poetry editor of *LIT Magazine*. Sometimes he blogs at isaghost.blogspot.com.

POETRY \$8 US

“The character, Ghost Machine, in Ben Mirov’s extraordinary poems creeps me out. It makes me feel uncomfortable, frustrated, and, at times, flat-out angry. I want to tell it to do something and be done with it. ‘Get a life,’ I say. But it never leaves me alone. Creepy’s good. Discomfort and anger are good. Feeling anything intensely in this life is good, from both sides of the grave.”

Ralph Angel, author of *Exceptions and Melancholies*

“The arrival of character into poetry’s stream of complexities, in this case, plenty complexity recycled for sure, is a cause for celebration when its arrival brings with it ideas, feelings, experiences and challenges filled with life-fortifying, exponentially enriching currents. Mirov’s poems sometimes seem as though they are composed with ghosts in mind, jilted zombies who eat and drink just like we do, who deadpan and mix explosive combinations to surprise and maybe, maybe let us visit what we’d miss if we weren’t invited into Mirov’s plan: *I plan to be another language in the body of a deer.*”

Dara Wier, author of *Remnants of Hannah*

“Ben Mirov is the champion of the sentence. Every sentence is perfectly carved from a cold metal machine in the BART tunnels of Oakland that loops reality. They erase what they compress. I read this book and then puke in the shower. I read this book and then bleed on the sheets. My earlobes are wet. My pants are too small. These poems are about needing to touch something that you know your hand will go through. Mirov’s poems are sick and crushing. This book marks the end of fucking around.”

Zachary Schomburg, author of *Scary, No Scary*

Ghost Machine was the winning manuscript in the 2009 Caketrain Chapbook Competition, as judged by Michael Burkard.

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