



BEN FAMA

ODALISQUE

BEN FAMA

*O*DALISQUE

FANTASY

Forever is the saddest word
The poem's not worth it
I'd like to read to you
What Andy Warhol said
About the traps of the rich
But my tastes are changing
This is a love note
To a Fire Island lifeguard
Tuscano shearling
And mauve champagne
I should never talk
Even after two sips
Though that's when I can
I hate the George V hotel
But I would take you there
Then walk to the open market
Some thoughts are not that great
The Internet is my home
Where it's easy to be beautiful
And seen and new
In the glow
In the spell
I thought I was better
I guess I won't ever be
God wants us to make out
Cause I'm in this airport
Where nobody's important
I just wrote a letter
Explaining all of this to you
In my head
The prism refracts
But the stone is cloudy
All that comes through
Are the deeper obsessions

Arvid Nordquist and dry shampoo
Cocaine and Pellegrino
This weather should have an entry
In *A Lover's Discourse*
A fully enclosed private garden
With direct access to the pool
Hardwood floors
Perfect light
I like, crave you
Doesn't it ever just make you sad
Plans you had with different people
And how it all can't come true?
I want the extremes
Of pleasure
Boredom
Watching my lovers cry
I really want to show something
To the lifeguard from Fire Island
Thoughts like nectar, international cities
To stand here a young prince
Unique in spirit
Replete with hospitality
Aren't you even curious
To see my hotel room
After I swim?
Sitting on my bed
I typed
Principal dancer
Into YouTube
And drank
To see the discourse
And the honor
Feels good
Standing at my window

Above Fifth Ave.
What I think I will miss most
When I die
Is color
And the light
Sometimes it just comes to you
Amidst occasional instances
Of radiance or darkness
I mean
Everyone has their shit
Then enough time goes by
That's your life
Maybe I expect too much
I wouldn't know how not to
In my room
With these portraits
In gold frames
Feels like theater
MGM Pictures
The bronze light of Hollywood 1928
The future isn't real
I should walk in golden rays
Past rows of motorcycles
To Coney Island
Because I know grace
Is more real than love
It feels so real
In the morning
On Fifth Ave.
With the lifeguard from Fire Island
Weightless in badinage
Whatever comes from art and life
Being can be too easy and common
Like soda
I let him come inside my world

Because he gave me a key
To Gramercy Park
Maybe tonight
I'll have a breakdown
Sometimes
I use this French product
To soften the water
When I soak in the bathtub
It is silent there
Like a tomb
Sometimes I wish
I was already in mine
Sometimes I wish
The world had a face
I could touch the cheek of
When I feel
I could be a part of it
When I cannot
And I lie in the hot water
Sometimes I wish
The pearlescent steam
Could sublimate the malaise
And the lassitude
That is there inside of me
Maybe it does
I believe it is that way
When the light touches down
Upon bunny lawns
Of Fifth Ave.
I don't care
About the lifeguard so much
Gravlax or Paris
I should call this friend
In Los Angeles
An aesthete who hosts parties by the pool

ODALISQUE

There's a picture of you on my phone
I look at when I'm bored
It's basically an American Apparel ad
In a world I have access to
I'm looking at it now
Or possibly through it
And listening to "*Gymnopédie* No. 3"
Sometimes I think it is a perfect song
I wonder what you are going to wear
To this cocktail event
At the Gershwin Hotel
We are going to tonight
But when I left you were sleeping
And I don't think you are awake yet
It becomes obvious
When I am thinking of you
Lying on the bleached sand
In the soft powdery
Easthampton light
I will die
Under conditions
Premeditated by myself
I think in that eyeliner
Lancôme and Dior
You would give me
Something to live for
By doing something
Remarkable
Like throwing
A champagne flute
Off a yacht
Making me
Want to throw you down

Against the hard-packed sand
The Amagansett waveline
Until all that is left to feel
Are the elegiac melodies
Nocturnes rapt in the air
I should hire a painter
To capture this feeling
So that we may simulate it again
Before returning to quiescence
Today it will rain
I should take you into town
To the galleries
In a Japanese yellow raincoat
To have some champagne
At a group show of landscape paintings
I'm sorry they will probably be shitty
Driving back to New York City
Mendelssohn, Grieg, Liszt
It is Memorial Day
Drinking grappa on ice
From a plastic cup
In traffic
I think I left my magazine at the beach
If you were not here
I'd be incredibly bored

FLÂNEUR

Fashion makes me less crazy
It should be looked at
Never discussed
It's an honest joy
To be shocked by beauty
In the 21st century
I was shocked when my lover was caught stealing
From Dean & DeLuca
I was thinking of a line
By Robert Hass
The floor manager stopped us
We simply went to a different store
Poetry
A requiem for leisure, pleasure, thought
I cannot take your high school friend's
Hoop earrings seriously
And every picture on my phone is obscene
Seriously, look at it—
All these fucking effetes
Boring travel stories
Details of somebody's dreams
Champagne condensating
On leather seats
All summer long
I wish I could afford a room
At the Peninsula New York
Suites with TVs above soaking tubs
With city views
And all that sun on Fifth Ave.
I live inside it too
I am at Uniqlo
Buying underwear
And after I paid

I stayed and shopped again
A surprising second erection
After you've just finished
And you know it's time

LOS ANGELES

Like any subscription member
of the Metropolitan Opera
fashion bloggers believe
they're at the center of perception.
I want to go where men go.
Is a high school crush
on an alien surf girl
the same as the need
to fatally possess
the other and the self?
My friends were in this band
called Second Life®.
Let's get high
talk about '90s nostalgia
Scientology
drink Diet Coke.
The Real is a teenager
drunk in a turn.
A blue dot pulsing down
Santa Monica Blvd.
Hackers are the
unacknowledged legislators of the world.
For something to be timeless
it must be outside mortality
and if humans exist outside of death
they're no longer subject to the violence
of sexual reproduction
or the fragility of life itself.
In these conditions Enya
will have no cultural efficacy.
Hope life now won't need.
Infinite sadness though possible now obsolete.
What did I do this weekend?

Listened to this song "Tropical Winter" on repeat
while POV jogging through Runyon Canyon.
Totally desperate boys following cute boys
making out under tumblr skies.
reblogged as gossip
sent from my iPhone.
Kenneth Anger fatigued and
decadent in silk
post-fantasy.
Negation is part of the
positive identity of an object.
There is no snow in Hollywood.
Celebrities constitutive of a
scene that draw the populations
restaurant owners want as their clientele.
In a single day three stars photographed
in the same gray hoodie.
I want to create a product too unstable
to be marketed.
Not to say lacking
maybe messy
discursive and sort of pushing
oscillating among the various dimensions of influence.
I could write here randy details of my consumer choices
banal and otherwise
it would not amount to much.
Mallarmé on fashion
Benjamin on fashion
monograph retrospective
of Guess's photo editorials
next to the bed.
So maybe alien visitations
directly influenced human history over the millennia.

What does it take to start a new life?

You take lonely trips to the city

you are interested in moving to.

Saturate the market with your resume.

During interviews order both coffee and juice.

Masterfully handle the acceptance of ontological incompleteness

by affecting the persona of the applicant they want to hire

a winning assurance that you never intend to realize

obvious to all parties six months into the job.

John Paul Gaultier staged his *Chic Rabbi*

collection at Paris Fashion Week FW'93

Very beautiful, very elegant, the orthodox religious

clothing and the gender bending

fits with his interest in tradition and iconic imagery

as well as the fact that he's treating somewhat impertinently

something that most people wouldn't dare play with in couture design.

When Gaultier talks about himself though he sounds so dumb.

TUMBLR SKIES

sunset me
Pouilly-Fuissé
a postcard in the mail
from Burbank, California
even my own thoughts
I think only somewhat
Haribo gummies
girls in fall clothes
I'd like to perform something
not dominated by industry
each consumer decision
is a chance to end the world
an expense report
celebrities vacationing
in sunny Polynesia
teens smoke salvia
in the Ikea parking lot
call your girlfriend
it's time you had the talk
now is a good time to start reading
a book called *Dead Souls* by Nikolai Gogol
on our second date
we put up this Hemnes wardrobe
there's exotic myths
that have to do with size
anorexic pool boys
serving hot dogs
in the nude
I forgot the things he said to me
a Polish working class guy
who went to Fordham
looked into the dark waters
considered suicide fall semester

a creep in an idle Honda Zipcar
in the parking lot
just staring
W Magazine
I dream all night

SNO - CONE

pics or it didn't happen
sort of hot girls
wearing Toms
other normsies

I'm behind a curtain
in a car
spending money
on Amazon.com

I get into the culture
of attention
elegiac pixels
an exit strategy

I'm Abercrombie
at the bus stop
completely lost
pill regimens

young and hungry
for new presence
this great sports club
at the next turnoff

I am a perfect person
more lace than sole
Giuseppe Zanotti
pride of an empire

I'm smart
as smart as Siri
chatting teens on Grindr
drunk in the sand

the critic says the work
was "Ikea-friendly"
I laughed and I don't even think
that phrase means anything

on Hollywood I was trance
my iPhone autocorrected
soulmate to simulate
we split an Adderall

in the mood
aliens fuck you
large oval eyes
reality is a buzzkill

girlwithcat2.jpg

I found you
on gothtrash.com
and saved your picture
to my computer desktop
it gives me the feeling
of something terrible
and familiar
a space
between lives
like seeing Marcel
seeing Gilberte
for the first time
how the fact of life itself
becomes a thing
languished and melancholy
I think I would like to lay
among southern magnolias
in snowfall
dark skies above
into which
I will never enter
I'm watching Maya Deren
maybe I will smoke weed
I called out sick
it's the afternoon

NOTES & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Odalisque, for Monica McClure

Cover image © Francesca Lahiri-Langley, used by kind permission
www.francescalahirilangley.co.uk

Several poems appeared in *Coconut*, *Everyday Genius*, *Heartcloud*, *Maggy*, and the *Poetry Project Newsletter*.

Ben Fama is the author of *Fantasy* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2015), *Mall Witch* (Wonder, 2012), and the chapbook *Cool Memories* (Spork Books, 2013). He lives in New York City.

Odalisque is the first chapbook in the 2014 series from Bloof Books. Each chapbook in the series will be released in a limited edition of one hundred numbered copies, followed by a digital release.

PDF version

March 2014

