

Tell Me If I'm Alone Here  
(Electric Broadcast)

Josh Hart

A Dink Press Chapbook

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## **This is Not a Fugazi Shirt**

It's not what they're selling-  
we've bought their shit anyhow-  
bought it in bulk, whatever hellish things included.  
War, poverty, degradation, segregation, cigarettes,  
and soul smegma.  
We eat it up in hopes of finding a fleck of gold  
beneath our teeth  
or poking our gums.

Yes, we bought it  
in bags with complementary spoons  
and napkins to protect our white  
linen bodies.

We will eat!  
and we will eat!  
and we will eat!  
because the great aurum is a story book  
that conjures ripe and easy gluttony!  
We'll never be able to resist temptation  
no matter what blessed womb we'd been delivered to  
and from.  
We are man!  
We want Parisian nights,  
high fashion,  
and perfect guitars.  
We want jeans  
that always fit right  
and upward mobility  
and free intoxication!  
We want well behaved children in restaurants  
and neutron star lovemaking

and battered breasts of corrupt cops  
and other hopeless agitators!  
We want all holy lights that go out sometimes,  
but always come back on (sometimes)  
We want soul love  
and no more appleseeds!  
I am guilty of avarice too, I understand.  
Guilty and hungry.  
Hungry like the rest of us.  
Never satiated,  
starved in the wealthiest streets and under the  
pinkest skies,  
starved in boxcars taking us towards physical  
locations that we can't touch,  
starved in our trenchcoats that bare names stitched  
in money,  
starved without the ritual of good sport or good wine  
or good newspapers.

All trees have grown terrible mists to survive  
and all our children are afraid of day-time  
boogeyman.  
Whatever shall we do but search for gold?

We search with our scientists,  
prophets of the cosmos bedazzled and bejeweled  
eyes and crook of divine arm.  
What do they have to offer us?  
Those stargazers in their moneyless garments?  
Rapping on their door, collective man  
cowed and frightful and glum.  
We screech and moan like the damned we are  
when we see that all they have  
is the corpse of every white rhino

and a world warming with the exhaust of our wanton  
pleasure  
and a doomsday clock three minutes to midnight like  
all the stories.

Veidt was right.  
It's over, finished  
fourth and goal and we blew it  
abort all new babies  
buy all new guns  
burn all paintings and poems and books and  
records.  
If you're of stronger stock,  
pray for an alchemist!  
someone to eat this mineral and digest it in their  
holy kabbalah stomach  
and churn out coal to power cities and make fire for  
freezing infants.

If you you are a divine shaman,  
the position of savior is available.

You just have to be able to  
free the Ein Sof,  
read the Tzimtzun,  
and cage the Bahal.

Is anyone listening?  
Are we alone here?  
Why do we put up with their apocalyptic visions?  
After all, we're the pearl  
in the eyes of the being  
that made the sea.

We are our own greatest lovers  
and our best givers of orgasms.

Why do we not shake off the yolk?  
If we can't do that,  
then why don't we end ourselves  
in one great, orgasmic act of violence?  
Afterall, the blade and the holy jigai  
are preferable to cosmic slavery.  
Maybe the spirit wants us around  
but, where is he?  
Where is the divine with his personal reassurances?  
Where is the divine helping us put our shoulders to  
the wheel?

I ask you, holy men.  
Where is he?  
Where do we find  
he who creates than makes complete?  
Where do we find his hands?  
And who brings forth herbage,  
then makes it dried up and dust colored?  
Did we hear him sing his own eulogy?  
Is that why our beds are lined with tears  
and we are all alone?  
Did we miss a recitation?  
Did we pray to holy Ka'bah  
facing west instead of east  
or east instead of west?  
Can that be forgiven?

Are we doomed to drown under identical banks  
and owl-eyed monopolies?



Will our nations of spastic goats  
demand the end of monopolized and rapine fear?

Will we recind our nature?  
Drink in mad ecstasy the death of pagan souls?  
burn our fields?  
deny all symbols of the Earth?

Will we descend into the mouth of Florence  
to sleep in icy rain and vile slush?  
Or will a swarthy and naked kahuna  
ascend from the choking ocean  
and banish the creatures made of smokeless fire  
from our marked vessels?

Or maybe, just maybe  
all we need is to pull our collar up  
and find a refuge from the wind.

## Tights

She tied a tourniquet with her stockings  
and slapped her extended arm.  
She had a mission,  
to spend an afternoon staring at her toe in a narcotic  
haze,  
her unconscious stepping towards real, hot, wide  
awake America.

Downstairs, men fell about and played guitar,  
and talked about life-enhancing breakbeat co-ops  
and green-scare, tube fed vegan diets.  
They rifled through coffee table editions of Bukowski  
and Genet  
and pathetically internalized those geniuses ancient,  
dynamic woe,  
though they would never experience the Great  
Depression  
or vagabond, petty criminality.  
She heard them all down there  
and she thought about their sailor tattoos,  
some scrawled behind ears,  
others scratched into chests and biceps.  
Hers was on her collarbone,  
inches from her throat  
and directly parallel to  
her crooked right nipple.  
She thought of the time  
she tried to make beer  
but the batch came out  
as spoiled water dotted  
with the floating corpses  
of hops and malt grains.

She thought of the time  
her band put on a show  
in her ex-boyfriends loft  
and she stole a bottle  
of his vicodin  
because she thought that was  
what Lydia Lunch would do.  
She thought of the time  
she went on a seven day binge  
with five baggy ravers and a washed-out Gainesville  
priest,  
and when they had run out of E's and beer  
she stood outside,  
and wrote an ode to the gibbous and bloodshot moon  
with spraypaint on the side of a dumpster  
though her paper was right there.  
She finally recognized that they all live  
like they want to be remembered by an anonymous  
third party  
when they're dead,  
instead of their family or friends.  
A little cleaner that way,  
a sparkling hope of fame they would never have.

She finally recognized that they lived in spastic,  
thrashing, constant,  
movement  
and none of that movement conjured any real  
feelings at all,  
save those already felt  
by dead writers  
and hopeless, dead, weightless chanteuses.

She was tired of being bored.

She was tired of bands and art and moving and  
colored trousers.

Her hands were never held.

Brixton was so small,  
so small and its sun beat through her window  
hard enough to make her sick.

Needle broke skin  
and downstairs  
someone brought out an accordion  
and pushed out wheezing tones  
to the beat of a gyrating,  
dancing typewriter.

## **Mexico**

Flat  
open  
road  
through Mexico  
Cans of beer  
with bad designs  
and words I cannot speak  
Tires skip over a petrified dog carcass,  
midnight  
a tableau of stars.

## **The Parisian Boy**

I walked drunk up the skirt of the River Seine  
and cut left towards the Place de l'Hôtel de ville,  
looking for a brandy and a coke and petit noir  
and 20 Galois Blondes,  
and a mighty course of viennoiseries.

It was a fine time to search for food,  
truly it was,  
because the streets were empty.  
The tourists had gone to bed,  
and the Château de Versailles  
and the Arc de Triomphe,  
were free of their vile, kindling eyes.

I walked under streetlights and past storefronts  
and all was quiet and the streets glistened  
and each curb rang with the sound of liquor-yelps  
and the ghost violin of Lili Boulanger  
tromping in a-minor boots through the naked  
streets.

I moved silently  
and then I saw a chain restaurant,  
the only spot of linoleum on a block of brick and  
Haussmannian folds.  
The arrogance and cute naivety of existence made me  
stop.

I watched the door open casting halogen light  
and then a figure moved out into the street,  
a figure totally unremarkable,

save the beauty of his clothes  
and the symmetry of his face  
and the graceful way he  
lit a pipe.

A pipe!

I felt a twinge of guilt for the cigarettes I smoke.  
They weren't beautiful enough anymore.  
They were filthy things,  
and, letting the romance of the Paname fill me,  
I tossed them into the gutter,  
careful not to disturb the beautiful creature in front  
of me.

He stepped back into the light  
and I got a better look at his clothes.  
A white t-shirt tucked into tweed trousers,  
leather suspenders hooked to buttons,  
a widebrimmed hat and leather work boots.  
Beautiful clothing, painfully beautiful.  
But they were workers clothes,  
rough hewn and motheaten.  
I admired the nobility of it all,  
the heart to communicate  
through fabrics and dyes  
his status as the subject of socialist pamphlets  
and archeofuturist disdain.

I couldn't help but approach him.  
My presence didn't startle him or upset his smoke.  
He was too cool for that.  
I told him my name and he told me his  
in English like gargling hot water.  
"Emile"  
I wanted to hear it often, every morning maybe.

I told him he dressed beautifully,  
far better than English boys.  
He thanked me and smiled with rosy, smooth  
cheeks.  
and then I understood that beauty  
is numb to all of France  
because they take it home with them.  
I told him he was art and he cocked his head  
and said that the Louvre wouldn't open till morning.



## The Hunt

The blood dries on the boy's trousers  
in mounds of brown,  
ribbed with liquid red.

He had ruined nine lives that day.  
In the name of queen and country,  
hunt and royal cunt.  
Nine lives,  
snuffed in  
Janus'  
dusty peephole.

One fox,  
caught by a hound  
whilst digging for haven  
in moist duff  
chest torn open  
left gasping for scant  
moments  
before sinking into death  
and depositing all of its innards  
into the awaiting fingers  
of buzzing detritus.

Another fox,  
bitten down through the neck,  
tip of tooth piercing jugular  
as it crawled under a fence  
towards hope.  
Struggling,  
scruff torn  
writing against jagged, dirty metal.

A pheasant,  
not the intended target,  
an unintended casualty with a plump breast and  
round neck  
torn to holy hell shredded feathers  
and hollow, meatless chest by the ravenous hounds.

The five dogs themselves, they were victims,  
given teeth as guns  
and starved of light and affectionate hand.  
They would always want blood.  
Always starved,  
capable of killing each other  
at any second  
for anything.  
Lastly, the boy ruined himself,  
evening hunt after evening hunt  
purged his combatant spirit  
ruined his thrusting and muscular Elhaz,  
crushed the hopes of taming all the land.

## Water and Sand

The round man  
with his fishing net  
moving as if he wasn't all there  
pulling one sturgeon  
into his net  
and lifting his prize up high  
and he was shaded by the great pier.  
There were two others,  
floating gently together.  
And old man cradling his wife  
rocking with her,  
holding her into his chest  
like she had died  
and he had found her.

And then I saw the seagulls.  
Plucking fish from the churning sea  
and tearing their flesh from their bones  
as they flipped and gasped for air.

It was then that I realized.  
that this coast  
was a place of death  
and that everything I saw:  
the man with a net,  
the couple floating,  
the seagulls taking their prey,  
was part of the same dance,  
a dance of remembrance,  
a shattered call of worry,  
offered to the wind.

I also realized that,  
my days as a spectator  
would one day end.

## **Brick**

Always,  
always,  
Crooks, we were.  
Uncertain.  
A thin, white line.  
Water on the floor.  
Sopping into our socks,  
our bedsheets.  
The roaches are everywhere.  
They are a family.  
Daddy with big ribbed legs.  
Mommy with wings  
that whip together.  
Baby's everywhere,  
burrowing into the carpet  
and 'round the electric sockets  
and in the sink and out the door.

Smells of oil and bleach and fish.  
Out of bandaids so we use our spit and a prayer  
but tenement walls are malevolent dream catchers  
and our voices are never heard.  
No place to put our Clorox so it's all out in the open.  
The family next door cooks potent food smelling of  
sun and latent spirituality  
and the family next door does the same  
and the family next door does the same still  
and all the smells making communion in battered  
hallways.  
Outside, washlines from building to building  
holding clothes that drip bathwater and soap  
down onto 7th street  
with dirt and no aplomb.

The 'burg graffiti isn't even pretty like Karolina down  
the block  
in her short shorts and crop top,  
popping gum in her pink/perfect mouth as she glides  
down 42nd  
or the purple (pink in the light)  
violets left on the altar of the church down West  
Bernard  
at Arcelia's Quinceanera,  
mother Mary's white tit and Calvinist-denying  
superpowers  
laying judgment on corner-store flowers.  
The graffiti is still and stifling.  
Pressurized tendrils keeping brownstone's tied to  
mason foundation.  
Creative carcinogens we inhale,  
churn in our infantile, enslaved lungs,  
and then spit up as dirty snow  
and hobo piss-up n' wino drag out blood smear  
on West 53rd.  
We're Charlie Chaplin on a bender,  
huffing paint in the bowery  
and predicting strange things for Mable.

We're F.Scott Fitzgerald  
throwing up in the Fountain of Freedom  
because love is not there and whisky is.  
We're immigrants in the Bronx  
and the day is dying  
and the pesticides are macking with the streets  
and city cops don't love our bodies.

Sleeping in alleyways after taking busty heina's  
to dance halls and drinking too many Tecate's

dreaming  
of imaginary viper rooms on Carnegie Hill,  
filled with white, barrel chested heroes  
and rich wealth without day planners  
and women slinking  
slipping down and out of celluloid.  
Never reaching peace.  
Gripping chain link fences  
to watch basketball players.  
Gripping switchblades in case  
we are jumped  
walking up over Prospect Park.  
Worrisome overcoats.  
Tribal thinking.  
No one dances quite like my brothers  
nor dodges chancas.  
Nor cooks peppers and plays hip-hop  
in weekend effigies.  
I'm glad they're there. I'm glad they don't know any  
better.  
Drowning is worse when you struggle.

There's a gigantic Coca-Cola bottle  
on a giant LCD screen in Times Square.  
I dream about it sometimes  
and in my dream we all are together,  
linking arms in Broadway's glow.  
We close our eyes and our bodies disappear,  
dematerialize into a fine mist and then flit away  
in northern wind.  
Only our souls are left, invisible,  
we orbit that coca-cola sign,  
finally away from the ash.

## Lightstore

The light of the discount food store  
shed God's vibrations  
but only at its entrance

wet  
the pavement was wet  
and cigarette butts floated limp  
in puddles of water slicked with oil.  
I was coming down from acid high and I daren't leave  
this car park,  
or look away  
from its holy light.  
Away, I might not absorb its grace,

it's  
Sola gratia.

I wondered if this parking lot  
is what New Yorker's dream about.  
Large swaths of open space  
broken up by ancient storefronts  
and pleasant smelling oak trees.  
I wondered and then ceased thinking  
because the small, floating fairy made of stars  
nipped my earlobe  
and buzzed around my neck.  
I wanted to look  
oh, how I wanted to  
but, you see, of I looked at the fairy directly  
my mouth would spew liquid cordite  
and that cordite  
would arm the tiny rebels



hiding in the gravel  
and who knows who they might kill?  
I just couldn't have that blood on my hands.  
You understand?  
I have to admit that I started getting emotional.  
I wished the little people would stop fighting.  
Can't they see God's marque?

"Red's discount food and gas."

The holy word.  
The undeniable scripture in halogen.

Do they refuse the reflections  
of white light in puddles?  
Do they not weep at the one broken bulb?  
that sits, edges jagged.  
A reminder of our sins?

Is that not enough of a reminder?  
Do I need to come down there?  
I swear I'll turn this parking lot around!

I took a fast food receipt,  
crumpled and abandoned in the cupholder  
and wrote a bible with my pinkie finger.  
I let it fell out the door,  
thought about cosmic waveforms  
and fell asleep.

## **Breakfast of Champions**

Two eggs fried on an orange pan  
liquid than hot oils spit and then white, solid amino  
protein chew

three pieces of toast from a broken down piece of  
1950's homogenization and anti-sex machinery.

one glass of orange juice tossed out after three sips  
because a fly chose to die in it  
and float with its legs crinkled in red-yellow ecstasy.

One cigarette, Samsun, all the way from Turkey,  
it was sold to me on the street corner on Roosevelt.  
Over 8,000 miles of carcinogen fancy over the Pacific.

A pot of coffee, no, two pots of coffee  
for shitwork and circumstance.

Mid-day

A bagel and a redbull  
breaking the tab from its base  
and tinkling it 'round the can  
in remains of taurine and spittle  
and heartwork hooded eyes.

Home

another cigarette  
and then out to Billmarky's in Chelsea  
one three dollar beer against the woodgrain of old  
70s dad yore  
and then I had two beers leaning now

and then I had a jack n' coke rolling  
and then I snuck a hit of weed  
in the filthy bathroom with its scategorical and  
orgastic history.  
and then out alone to central park  
wishing that all neurotransmitters would die  
and wondering if the brass carousel in central park  
still shone under all the lights

## Flannel

Sky hot  
like breathing  
face first into  
a mug  
of coffee  
I had visions of mexico  
and beatles and booze  
and are we finished yet?  
Have we even begun?  
The embittered wives  
trample through  
the information highway  
and we might be alone  
and we might be all together  
and it stings like  
clothes tags on the back  
of your neck and goddamn.  
goddamn father  
father of rosaries  
father of circuitry.  
father of midnight  
father of magic  
tell me if I'm alone  
tell me who I need  
to speak to  
and what we have  
to speak about.  
father  
tell me who I need to touch  
and tell me  
how it will make me feel.

**In my tenement hands.**

The best tastes were whiskey.  
It is night beneath a wrong colored sky.  
I understand our misunderstanding  
standing tall, bridge of bones  
a crucifix.  
The once loose gravel road.  
I held albion.

## **People (Goodbye Sun)**

Let's play a game  
a hand wrapped in bandages  
cool walls  
irony in 40 pages of pulp filth  
the house  
the house with plasticine  
the house with naked space  
can't set foot without disturbing rats  
people weaving and jabbing  
at the demons in their skin  
kind people  
desperate

old women with wrinkled areolas  
and old men with visible ribs  
people who have never seen a wooden fence  
outside of television  
people who breathe life into their veins  
at the drowning of the sun.  
people who toil in factories instead of fields  
people whose effort is simply pissing against  
the moon.

**This punk is a folkie.**

This hand holding mall spree is a pipe bomb.  
We kissed in the food court.  
When we let go of each other's hands  
they will be sweaty  
and they will be cold  
in the air conditioning.  
The walk to the car was an arms race.  
I held the door open for you.  
We tried to match each other's disgust  
of suburban America  
but I sipped my slurpy  
and noticed we weren't in  
New York.

## **Thine stethoscope**

The poems grew legs  
and walked  
to their subjects  
like cats to their owners  
through muddied streets  
wholly unaware  
of their composite skin  
that hangs in 26 letters  
unaware of their status  
as vehicles of love  
and pithy sex.  
They walk  
wisped and holy  
They walk  
every which way on cat paws  
They walk  
without malice  
They walk  
their hands in pockets  
They walk  
in improper meter  
They walk  
from torn notebooks  
They walk  
sometimes limping  
They walk  
sometimes strong  
They walk  
battered and broken  
They walk  
whole and alone  
The recipient of these broadcasts



will cry, or so I hope  
weep and wail  
and then find me in a stairwell somewhere  
in the pit of the night  
and embrace me with gripping and tender arms  
Maybe they'll read my spirit and look wistfully  
out of a window somewhere and smile  
and then spend the night gripping a hot mug  
and thinking of firelight.  
It would even be okay  
if they tossed these walking machinations  
away  
like the burnt, old, evil spirit  
and the ancient despair did.  
It could be okay,  
if they were simply touched,  
gazed at,  
pondered.  
They're not but nuggets of insecurity  
bathed in cosmic vision  
dried by urban wandering  
and rolled with lonesome ecstasy.

## Tranquility

Boys  
Boys  
Straddling  
the river  
Somme  
Boys  
Boys  
with rifles  
and knapsacks  
and mud  
and leather  
and their motivation  
peppered and bled  
James  
a tall one  
whom fate swaddled  
and laid on the west bank  
From Yorkshire  
a ruddy lad  
who grew strength  
and a well ruddered head  
from the River Teel  
sprinting  
through trees  
and hedgerows  
their yearning branches play  
the imaginary hands  
of Peg Powler  
Swimming  
through water  
green with folktales  
soft silt

He swam  
to the arms of his  
Father  
He swam  
to the  
shore  
And when schooldays  
pierced his woods  
he swam to the  
center of the river  
and tried  
his hardest  
to  
drown  
and when he washed  
ashore  
he was a seedling  
ripe with kismet

The war broke out  
in the fertile years  
of primary school  
the tale of adolescence  
Pray for them!  
The ones crowded  
around newspapers  
the font  
expertly  
belying  
excitement  
and,  
action.

The Archduke is dead!  
The Archduke is dead!  
In James' spine  
In James' stomach  
the terrible, violent  
flash of movement  
like the Agony  
of St. Sebastian.  
His world  
turned inward  
and his eyes damned  
the water  
and the trees  
and the hedgerows.

He enlisted  
within the week  
and now  
with fates red string  
taught  
he is in the west  
camped  
with regiment and steel  
fresh faced men  
in tents  
with yellow playing cards  
and biscuit tin tummies.

Comradery  
jovial  
untested  
by carnal bloodlust  
Oh, the strings  
so taught

taught to a threaded  
edge  
James  
unaware  
a boy  
of heart  
unknowingly disposed of

The day leaks  
into night  
the blanket  
comfort  
of the hiding, mischievous  
night  
In the tent  
James and six  
others  
one soldier with lice  
but he won't tell  
boys!  
boys!  
Pray for boys!  
and the ruler breaks  
the bottle  
on the hull of  
this mad parade of death  
James  
in his bunk  
heart filled with  
a hidden  
Joan of Arc lust  
and youthful  
focus  
and

for  
the  
first  
time  
he wants it gone  
so he buries his head  
in his arms  
and thinks  
of  
the  
water  
and thinks  
of  
his  
father  
The string  
taught  
so taught  
and tomorrow  
waits below

## **Motherfuckers/Redeemers**

Kansas is gone. It never was here,  
neither was wonderland.  
All gone! All gone! All gone! All gone! All gone!  
We sleep on streets made of equal-parts cobblestones  
and knives.  
We held hands with Hitler  
and Mao.  
We shiver the whole night through  
but all the books are free  
and the tenements serve good, bloody steak.

We fucked off!  
We got free!  
We forgot about everything!  
Good luck! Good luck! Good luck! Good luck! Good  
luck!  
Open your heart and check for wounds.  
Take care! Take care! Take care! Take care! Take  
care!  
The atom bomb loves you!  
Rockets will fall and rockets will fall!  
Keep your F's and G's sharp  
and don't be afraid of infinity.

## Self-Titled

Remember our lives as they were:  
Campaigns of love and lust for youth  
Ravenous souls contained by fragile bodies  
Looking for tastes of each other  
In the bushes near the school gates  
early in the morning,  
escapades lit by the morning  
fires of the parish town.  
Drink in the small town firelight.  
Drinkin' in the small town firelight.  
Cheap lager on ice and you swore  
that we would write forever  
and you swore that you'd alwas swear  
"Fuck!"  
"Cunt!"  
"Shit!"  
we shouted under holy moonbeams.  
"Don't cry!"  
"Don't cry!"  
"It's all going to happen!"  
"Everything we would ever need!"

Blessed, we were.  
So sure of our infinite lives of untarnished love,  
that we collapsed in sleep together  
after the party  
but before the work.  
Blessed.  
Blessed.  
But nothing escapes the rust,  
and, in this way, some of us pretended to sleep  
looking at the stars  
perhaps praying  
perhaps not.



## Letters of a cigarette holder

The west was blank  
and the east was self inspection  
January 1st, 1963  
Rio De Janero  
Brazil  
Big Action, to put things in a nut  
but I'm not really enjoying it because  
you blew in with a rack of guns,  
a scheme in your brain.  
I think we can satisfy us both.  
There is a shortage of money  
\$6 a month, to \$7.50  
It's a rough manned wolf territory  
but god I missed the animals.  
I don't have much time for the present  
I'm making a living, by God.  
I am trying now for a jeep  
and on the show I'll be the master of it all  
Man I want a goddamn out.  
I'm planning to return to the states  
Man, I'm doing my damn best.

## **The Smoker Who Fell From Grace With His Lungs**

Fumbling in his vest pocket  
looking forward all day to her touch  
harsh nothing of paper in the foyer when he gets  
home  
telling what financial revelations?  
Triggering which worry reactions?  
He found the cigarette and placed it  
in her no-vacancy, closed grip.  
He angrily snatched  
the lighter from pants  
and in doing so abandoned all of of the love he had  
for her.

He moved it towards her.

She leaned in.

He pulled away.

“Don’t expect me to give you a light because I won’t.”