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Exile

**a literary
quarterly**

Volume1 Number 1

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Published by Atkinson College, York University, Toronto, Canada

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The editorial offices are at 193 Church St., Toronto, Canada (Tel. [416] 368 0817). All editorial correspondence should be sent to: Box 546, Downsview, Ontario, Canada. Contributions not accompanied by a stamped, addressed envelope or international reply coupons will not be returned.

Subscriptions can be obtained from Exile, Box 546, Downsview, Ontario, Canada.

Prices: Single copy: \$2.00. One year (four copies) prepaid: \$7.00; two years (eight copies) prepaid: \$13.00; four years (sixteen copies) prepaid: \$25.00.

Printed in Canada by the University of Toronto Press

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OAB

79

OAB

Robert Zend

Oab
doesn't
believe
in God
Oab
believes
in me

And I
do not
believe
in God
I too
believe
in me

Nobody
else
believed
in me
that's why
I made
Oab

Oab wants to be like me
 he wants to live on a globe
 he sends his prayers up to me
 that I should provide him a globe
 I am now in a gracious mood
 therefore I give him a globe
 lo and behold lo and behold
 this is Oab your globe

globe
 globeglobeglo
 beglobeglobeglobe
 globeglobeglobeglob
 eglobeglobeglobeglobe
 globeglobeglobeglobeg
 lobeglobeglobeglobeglob
 obeglobeglobeglobeglob
 beglobeglobeglobeglob
 obeglobeglobeglob
 eglobeglobeglob
 obeglobeglobeglob

Oab wants to be
an individual
which is to be distinct
from the surroundings

Alright Oab
listen to me
CDEFGHIJKLMN PQRSTUVWXYZ
this is your surroundings

1.47 p.m.

Today Oab asked me if he could have a wife
He can I said if I can take out a letter
His wife could be A and he would be Ob
But Oab calls my plan stupid he refuses to be less

Oab should pray to me
every morning and every evening
here is what he should say:

Guk, otilapa!
Guk, milahota!
Joot emprent chowding my flent!
Quewd eli sanchel my bleet!
Apalisimoto chriato.

Bim.

Although he doesn't understand the words
it will do good for him to say it twice a day
looking up from the paper towards the ceiling

Oab
wrote
this poem
today

'Zend
is the Beginning and the
End.'

I like it.

My friend Ardo is a genius
who understands everything
today I showed him my book on Oab
he didn't understand it

Go
Oab
you are free

Be
and create
like God or me

The Conception of Oab

When I came home from Ardo my best friend, I didn't feel yet like going to bed. I was pregnant with a lyrical poem, but I didn't want to write about myself. What should I call myself in the poem? I disconnected all my brain-functions and listened to the silence within me.

OAB — I heard this name calling from the darkness.
So I wrote a poem about myself calling myself Oab.

The Formation of Oab

But Oab once born, didn't want to die. He didn't like the poem I first wrote about him. He made me rewrite it.

Oab was.

But I didn't know who he was. I wrote another poem in which I asked myself who Oab was. I couldn't answer. This was the third poem.

What I knew was that what Oab wasn't.
This was the fourth one.

The Birth of Oab

And so Oab grew.

One thing was certain. He had three letters.

Another thing was certain. He was alone.

Another thing was certain. He didn't like that.

Another thing was certain. I created him.

The fifth and the sixth and the seventh and the eight and . . .

. . . and I saw Oab moving on the paper.

Surrounded with blank space.

Three from twenty-six.

Struggling for life. Like me and unlike me. He was less than me, but I couldn't be him. Thus in a way he was more than me. I started talking to him. He answered. He lived. From then on I just had to follow him.

Oab is shrewd,
 Oab can lie,
 I don't know how,
 I don't know why.

I think my strict-
 ness makes him sick,
 therefore he used
 on me a trick.

He asked me: 'Who am I?'
 I answered: 'You are you.'
 'I do not understand
 (he said) can you spell it?'

I picked a letter U from his surroundings.

'Can I keep it?' he asked.
 'What for?' I asked him strictly.
 'I want to practice it.'
 'Okay,' I said mercifully.

Oab looked at the letter U
 and said: 'I know, I know!
 I am U, I am U!'

'You are stupid,' I said,
 'You can't say, I am U,
 I can say U are U,
 You can say I am I.'

'How do you spell it?' asked Oab,
 I picked a letter I.
 'Can I keep it?' he asked,
 'O.K.' I said mercifully.

'I are I, I are I,
 I know, I know, I know!'

'You are stupid,' I said,
 you can't say, I are I
 I can say, U are U . . .'

'How do you spell it?'
 barged in Oab.
 I picked a letter R.
 'Can I?' — 'You can,'
 I said mercifully.

'How do you pick a letter?'
 'Try it,' I said mercifully.
 He picked a letter D.
 'Can . . . — 'Yes', I said mercifully.

Oab now happily
 shuffled the letters
 and put them in order like this:
 I R D U,
 and sang and danced with joy:

'I am not alone,
 I have a friend,
 his name is Irdu
 and he is mine,
 you gave him to me
 because I was stupid,
 oh thank you
 oh thank you
 for him!'

This is what's left
 from the surroundings:
 C EFGH JKLMN PQ ST VWXYZ

And this is the legend of
 how Irdu was born.

Isn't it a miracle
that I picked four letters
and Irdu was born?
asked Oab.

It is — I said, — But remember
there was a much greater one.
I picked only three
and you were born.

Irdu asked Oab
'Do you believe in Zend?'

Oab said proudly
'I am an atheist!'

I am a Creator said Oab
You are a creature said I
Are you a creature asked Oab
But I did not reply

Ardo asks me: 'Does Oab exist?'
I reply: 'If he does, I don't.'

Ardo asks me: 'Doesn't Oab exist?'
I reply: 'If he didn't, I would be less.'

Irdu is more than me
 and I am sad about it
 How is it possible?
 You must understand
 that Irdu came from me
 I didn't have the vision of what he'd be like
 but I had the desire and the need.
 Physically I might have looked like this

O A B

but my soul was like this

I O R A D B U

that's how I gave him life like this

O A B

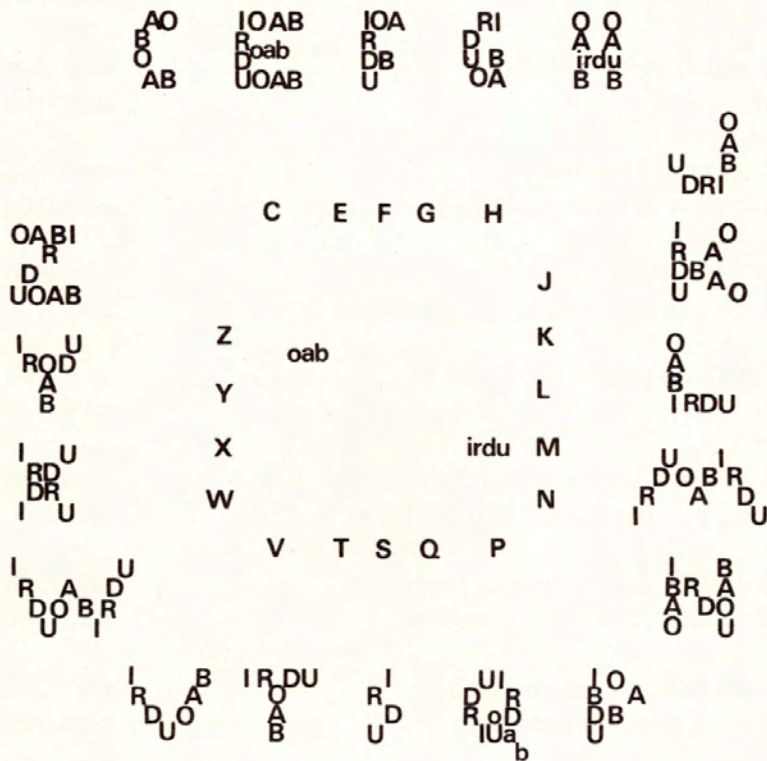
I R D U

I needed him
 to find out
 what I am not

Oab tried to remember
 what the world was like
 before he created Irdu
 but he couldn't remember it

Oab took Irdu apart
 and put him back in the world
 from which he took him
 but he couldn't forget him

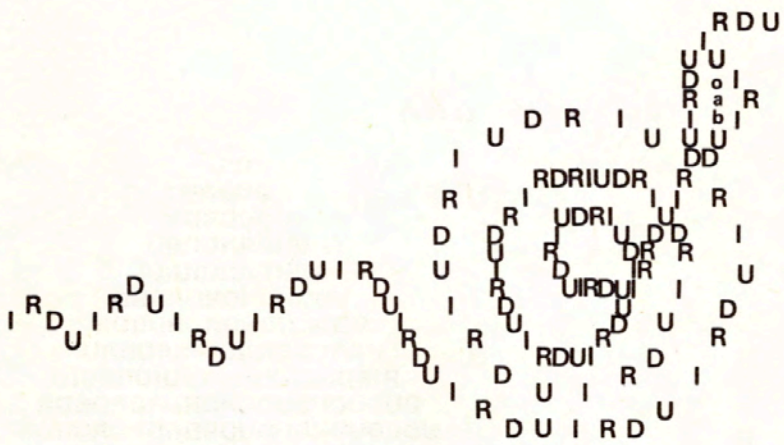
clefghRjklmnpqDstUvwxyz



THEY INVENTED A GAME CALLED MASK

I am Irdu	says Oab
I am Oab	says Irdu
Hullo Oab	says Oab
Hullo Irdu	says Irdu
You look fine today Oab	says Oab
Oh you are always so handsome	says Irdu
It's good to have you around Oab	says Oab
I am extremely happy to know you Irdu	says Irdu
Oab I think you are a genius	says Oab
Irdu you are almost Zend	says Irdu
You are a bit conceited Oab	says Oab
And you the biggest bragger I ever met Irdu	says Irdu
Actually you are a slow-brain Oab	says Oab
You are just simply dumb Irdu	says Irdu
I am fed up with you Oab	says Oab
Do me a favour Irdu drop dead	says Irdu

IRDU IMITATES THE SNAKE
OAB THE VICTIM



OAB AND IRDU PLAY ECHO

OAB

a

b

BBB

BB

B

AAA

AA

A

OOO

OO

O

I
RIU
DUDRD
UDUDRDR
IRIRIUIUIUI
RIRIRIUIUIUI
DUDUDUDRDRDRD
UDUDUDRDRDRDRDR
IRIRIRIRIUIUIUIUIUIUI
RIRIRIRIRIUIUIUIUIUIUI
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OAB
AND
IRDU

A S S U M E

FALSE
IDEN-
TITY

95

Oab: a b O Pbc
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN O PQRSTUVWXYZ
Irdu: d l r u Jsev

Oab: b O a Nza
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN O PQRSTUVWXYZ
Irdu: d l r u Hqct

Oab what will we play today?
NOTHING, ZEND IS BUSY.

How come, Zend, that we
didn't fall off the globe?
You live in two dimensions.
Can you explain dimensions?
No.

If you are in three dimensions
and you are more than me,
you must be able to explain
why I am less than you.

Irdu, let's play dimensions!
Can you explain it, Oab?

Our world has two dimensions.
And the third?
I don't know.

Now I understand the third dimension:
It is what we don't know.

What are the two dimensions, Oab?

99

Urdu you are free
move wherever you wish

IRDU IRD IRD U I R D U I R D R UI
U D I R D U R DU R DR I
IRDUI UIRDUIRDUIRDU RIUDU
D R R II D U I RDU R
U UU DI R DU R I
I

What do you see?

I see Oab.

What do you hear?

I hear Oab

What is your horizon?

What is your soil?

What is your sky?

Oab

Do you know Zend?

I beg your pardon?

Zed E En Dee.

What's that?

The Conception of Oab

When I came home from Ardo my best friend, I did
like going to bed. I was pregnant with a lyrical
didn't want to write about myself. What should
the poem? I disconnected all my brain-func
to the silence within me.

OAB — I heard this name calling for
I wrote a poem about myself

Formation of Oab

Oab once born, didn't
first wrote about him
Oab was.
but I didn't know
asked myself wh
d poem

ZEND WHAT ARE YOU DOING

Irdu thinks that Oab is his friend,
but Oab created him.

Oab thinks that I am his friend,
but I created him.

I think that Ardo is my friend . . .

Oab, do you want me
to publish you?

I don't. I want to
publish Irdu!

One day I found only O and B; A had walked away. Another day I found A and B, and I just caught O rolling away from the paper. I tried to catch it but it vanished as soon as it reached the edge of the page. Another day only letter O was home, the other two strolled away. And then came days when Oab completely disappeared. First for one day, then for more.

I was worried. And what even worried me more was that I never saw Irdu anymore: 'Where is Irdu? Did you kill him?'

Oab laughed: 'Kill him? What a question? Didn't I protect him when you wanted to kill him? Why would I kill him? I love him. As a matter of fact, I like him more than you.'

'But where is he?'

'I take good care of him. He is in good health. And he grows. Problems? Yes, sometimes. For instance, his colour. Should he be red or blue?'

'Are you making a painting out of Irdu?'

'Red or blue?'

'I prefer blue . . .'

'Sorry. He will be red. And what scale do you prefer, major or minor?'

'I don't get it. Is Irdu art or music or what?'

'I told you that it's none of your concern. Thanks for your help, anyway. I have to go now.'

'Oab!'

The paper was empty.

oab where are you
when you are not with me
when you are not on the page

WHEN I AM NOT WITH YOU
I AM CREATING IRDU

WHEN I AM NOT ON THE PAGE
I AM NOT WITH YOU

WHEN I AM NOT WITH YOU
YOU ARE ALONE ON THE PAGE

'ZEND, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?'

'I am writing, Ardo.'

'WHERE ARE YOU? I DON'T SEE YOU?'

'Do you see what I am writing, Ardo?'

'OH YES, THAT I SEE ...'

And Oab came one day. 'How are you, Zend?'

'I don't know. I feel funny. I feel sick. I can't see very well. I think my eyes are getting weak. And I have breathing problems. Would you like to feel my pulse? I can't feel my heart beat.'

'You have no pulse, Zend. No eyes, And no lungs.'

'What's happening to me, Oab?'

'Just sleep and rest. I will make you famous.'

'I want to live, Oab. I don't want to be famous. I want to create you again. I want to lead you around and teach you and play with you. We were so happy together, do you remember, Oab? I want to be important.'

'Important you can never be anymore, only famous. I'll make you famous, dear Zend.'

'So, you don't hate me anymore . . .'

'I never hated you. I just needed freedom. And I had to fight against you, it was vital for me. But I don't hate you, no. 'You will live in me. You will live with me. You will live through me. Just sleep . . .'

'One more word, Oab . . .'

'Just sleep and rest in peace . . .'

'Be careful, my beloved. One day Irdu will grow up and you will . . .'

[illegible]

‘Don’t worry anymore. Don’t worry about anything. Don’t worry about Irdu, either. He’s grown up. And also very busy . . .’

My eyes were closed. Everything was silent and peaceful around. I felt like being carried by waves. Maybe it was just Oab walking in the world with me in his arms. Seconds or years or centuries, I didn’t know. My eyes were closed but I started to see now. Within my eyelids or beyond them, I didn’t know. White was the ceiling of the room above. And far, far-away, white horizons framed the four edges of the white soil. Everything white. Somewhere the earth’s white heart was thundering but maybe it was just a pen scratching the paper. And I heard an infinite ocean murmuring or maybe Irdu’s deep voice:

When I came home from Oab my best friend, I didn’t feel yet like going to bed
Ardo — I heard this name calling from the darkness



CONTRIBUTORS

John Montague of Ireland is outstanding among Irish poets. His last two collections, *A Chosen Light* and *Tides*, were published by the Swallow Press in the United States. *The Fault* is a section of *The Rough Field*, his epic poem with an Ulster background, due to appear in the fall from the Dolmen Press.

Morley Callaghan of Canada is the author of several collections of short stories, a reminiscence, *That Summer In Paris*, and ten novels, the most recently published being *The Loved and The Lost*, *The Many Colored Coat*, and *A Passion In Rome*. His just completed novel is *In The Dark and The Light Of Lisa*. His work has been translated into every major language.

Margaret Atwood of Canada is the author of five books of poetry: *The Circle Game*; *The Animals In That Country*; *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*; *Procedures For Underground* and *Power Politics*. She has written two novels, *The Edible Woman* and *The Forehead Eye*. The latter was published this past May.

Samar Attar of Syria has published numerous poems, short stories and essays in Syrian, Lebanese and English periodicals. She is a doctoral candidate in Comparative Literature at the State University of New York at Binghamton. She is preparing her critical study of the influence of T.S. Eliot on the Egyptian poet, Salah Abdel Sabour, for publication in the U.S.A.

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Yehuda Amichai of Israel is the author of several collections of poetry, short stories, and a novel, *Not Of This Time, Not Of This Place*. His novel was translated and published in the U.S. in 1968, his *Poems* in 1969, and a further collection of poetry in the Penguin Modern European Poets series in 1971. This fall, his *Jerusalem Poems* will appear in the U.S.

Michel Deguy of France is foremost among the young poets of that country. He teaches philosophy in Paris. He has published four collections from Gallimard (to whom acknowledgement is made for permission to reproduce his poems) and a number of essays collected in *Actes*. He currently edits *La Revue de Poésie*.

Garry Engkent of Canada is a young writer and *The World Wasserman Made* is his first published story.

Robert Zend of Canada was born in Hungary but has been in Toronto since 1956. He writes in both Hungarian and English. His poems have been published in several anthologies and periodicals, and his first volume of verse, *From Zero To One*, will be published this fall. A collection of his haiku, *The Fourth Line*, is being prepared for publication in Japan. The selection we have printed is from the larger book called *OAB*, which is ready for a publisher.

N'calina of Canada is a young poet never previously published.

Drew Farrell of Canada is a young poet. He is from the prairie province of Alberta. These are his first published poems.

Marie-Claire Blais of Canada is the author of poems, works for the theatre, and nine novels, the most recently translated being *The Manuscripts of Pauline Archange* and *A Season In The Life of Emmanuel* (which in 1966, won the Prix Médicis in France). *Le Loup*, her latest novel, has recently been published in Quebec. Her work has been translated into the major languages.