

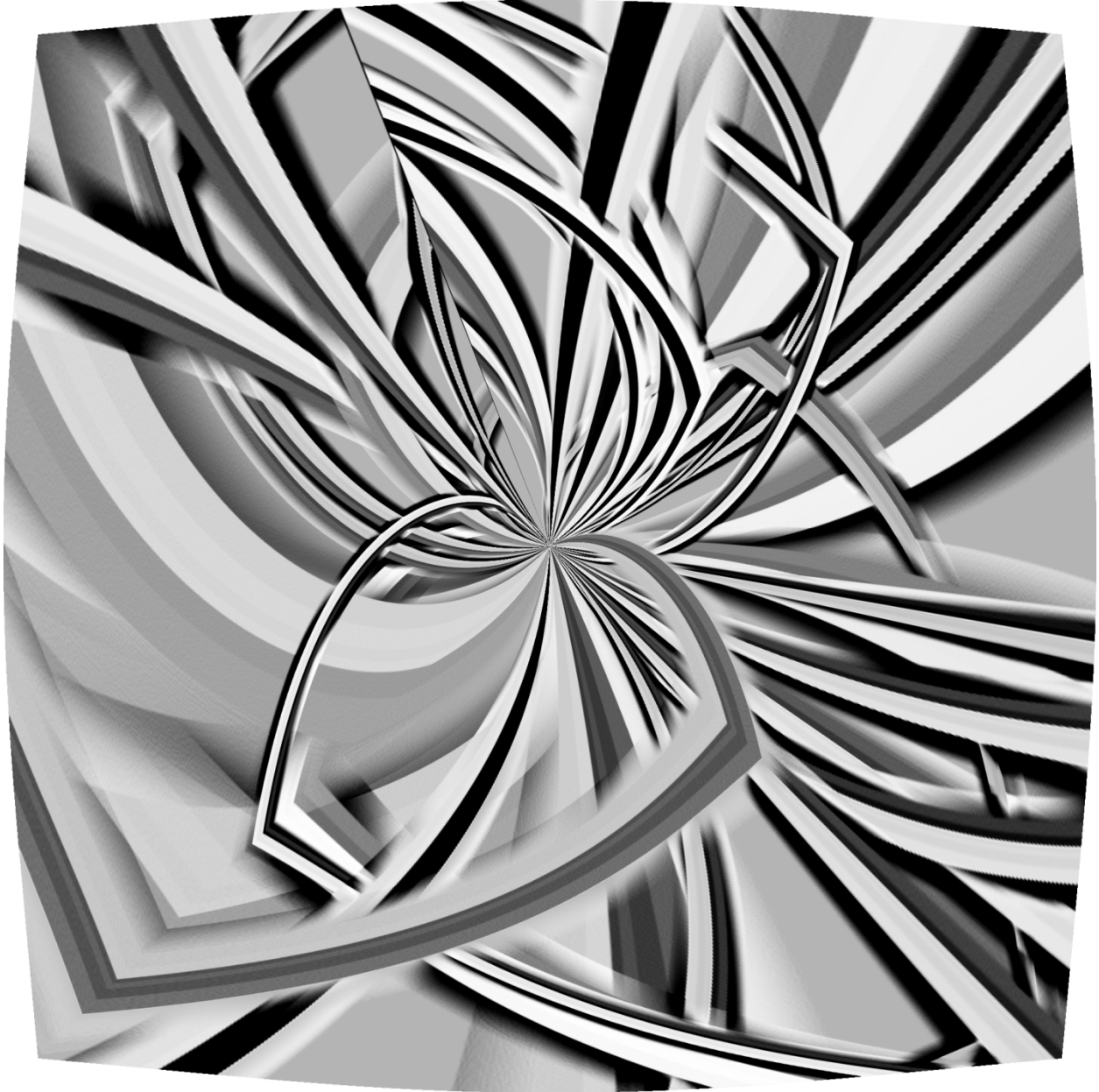


Jonathan Borden

THE DEFORMED
TRANSFORMED

A Rubáiyát

THE DEFORMED TRANSFORMED



Seventeen, Jonathan Borden, 2012

*Love and scandal are the
best sweeteners of tea.*

—Henry Fielding, “Love in Several Masques”



THE DEFORMED
Transformed

A RUBÁIYÁT

BY JONATHAN
BORDEN

Halifax • MMXII



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and distributed by Jonathan Borden.

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The names and identifying characteristics of real
people, living or dead, have been changed.

Any similarities to real people or events, other than those specifically cited, are unintentional and are for purposes of illustration only.

Set in Garamond.

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Call to Arms

I

Semester, take up your arms and unfurl
Your banner; Fortune has more than one pearl
And you have been deceived, you poor fellows,
Sick with desire when you've habit to hurl.

II

Fortune, a woman, is devious lore
Which does to men what falls do to the floor—
She hits you hard, harder than the one thing
That's hard for you to bear and to endure.

The Seer

I

If a glance can expose what I desire—
Invite the glancè with me to retire—
And if an eye can warm with its dark coal
My chastity, why does my wink cool fire?

II

Fortune has graced me with the great pleasure
Of feeling with great tact Life's next measure;
But, why does Fortune from my life withhold
Love's coal concealed like a burning treasure?

III

I cursed Fortune and resented my fame;
I sought the Chatelaine's fabled war game
And I conjured the winds to conceal me
As I prepared to look into the flame.

IV

Perfume purified for me the thick air
And made it light with its vanity fair
As query led to quest and I awayed
To High Tea, "Hierophant" my *nom de guerre*.

V

Sometimes, I get a good feeling; I *feel*—
The Chatelaine handed me a prayer wheel
And, as she poured the tea, I prayed mantras
That made Life taste like pekoe with orange peel.

VI

Perhaps, I dare say, interaction saves,
And, like thin wind, contact does calm the waves;
Freedom has the great scent of rose water
And rose red are Anticipation's slaves.

The Midwife

I

When but a girl, I peeled an orange bare
And I wanted to emerge like it, fair,
And beloved and able to quench thirst.
I still search, peeling still, but in despair.

II

An orange is like a wet, swollen birth
And as I have coaxed many, I have mirth
At the thought of conceiving, but I can't
So I seek my child from peel to unearth.

III

Two of the Fates, they plucked me—they fucked me—
And now, I have no children but debris;
I was raped by Fortune, yet I am still
Hopeful for an easy delivery.

IV

Rumour on swift wings has brought to me strength
And an invitation asking at length
If I could attend the Chatelaine's tea
Which will take place in her den on the tenth.

V

The Chatelaine gave me a saffron dress
And a pearl comb to use and to impress,
Now I have a voice; now I can bear, bear
My little word-child—one gives as one gets.

VI

Thoughts, like children, grow within us and pain
In birthing them exists to teach us plain
And simple that we are not Creators
But that we are only what we retain.

The Thief

I

Silver-potted ashes of my Self burned
In a covetous flame now overturned
Seem the profoundest of mud as I weep
And, for once, I feel so very concerned.

II

I have taken from men jewels and dreams,
Perfumed linens, watches; I have torn seams
And pocketed and pilfered wingèd things
All so I could fly over honest streams.

III

You know, I had my heart stolen one year;
Youth was a thin cocoon and Love's so queer
It was enough to make one mad at it
So I decided I would take what's near.

IV

When I opened a purse I took I found
An invite to the Chatelaine's compound,
So I know I must go; I must go there
When she hosts and I am suddenly crowned.

V

The Chatelaine is like a chardonnay,
Her hair fair, her words a silky bouquet;
Once, she read my cards with no reversals
So when the message was clear, I did pay.

VI

The greatest theft is of Art and I paint
A jewel when I want to be a saint
And take a pearl when I need to feel blessed;
Tomorrow, I will need and take restraint.

The Courtesan

I

I am Naomi, pomegranate-eyed,
Purple-pitted stare, a husbandless bride;
My worth is my hair, bought up in silk strands
And tied, for it is implied I betide.

II

My call at present is to change my ways,
To channel cleanliness and set ablaze
Those bridges which I have crossed so lonely;
And, I will emerge worthy of your praise.

III

A heart-shaped box is not fit to conceal
A woman's thoughts which, like blood, do congeal
And, I am a thinker that men can't hear
But, I'm a tinker, and my pan's cold steel.

IV

'Twas whispered by a lover in my ear
That the Chatelaine sought with hope to clear
My raw name over tea and I agreed,
So, I'll make myself pretty and sincere.

V

I met her once at court and she liked me
Which was astonishing since I'm debris;
Torn, scorned, and tossed aside because I count
My coins on a bed; she and I agree.

VI

In pleasure, unlike in Love, a man dies
So often that a woman will apprise;
The good for her, but, oh, the worst for them,
They who just will not decriminalize.

The Duke

I

My titular duty is to myself;
I am the State of Mind; love of oneself
Is foundational and vocational
And found with books on every man's shelf.

II

I am seeking an artwork so damned great
That its splendour will enthrall all I hate;
A Raphael or Michelangelo
Will suffice in the place of some hot bait.

III

A prisoner of my Grace, I need help
To overcome my vanity; a yelp
Pleading for such has been my vocation
And, I am huge into artful self-help.

IV

At the *salon* we looked at each other
Followed by her sweet words as den mother,
Then she begged me to visit her for tea
And her voice was art enough to smother.

V

We go way back, she and I; we once caught
Haddock together at sea and we got
Caught sneaking bites of it fried one warm night;
She taught me to kiss and to own my spot.

VI

'Tis nobler to have hungered with great care
Than to make and dine on a gilded prayer,
And, I am hungry; I wish to feast now
With panthers and to know their slanted stare.

The Nun

I

An Augustinian Sister I am
And have been so for a lengthy exam;
My vows are to the Lamb but I feel so
Empty and weak without a druggist's dram.

II

For the moment, I write verses for girls,
Instructing them to pray with their small pearls;
I endeavour to teach the world that prayer
Is the drug that makes white lines into whorls.

III

By Grace, I do need a medic who can
Procure the capsules in full, no less than
One thousand; I need medicine to numb
Me, to cure me, to be my harmattan.

IV

At the sound of the three bells we did meet,
She suggested tea to soothe me and sweets;
I must say, I did oblige the offer
And now we are to have some luncheon meat.

V

I have been her confessor since scandal
Permeated her life like a vandal;
She tells me her sins and her transgressions
And my blessing is easy to handle.

VI

Drugs aren't angels, no matter how lofty
They can make one when in the sky; frosty
Is the cloud on which sits the wand'ring Lord
And he likes a tea, too, when he's naughty.

Conciliation

I

You, you are here because you will be born;
Nothingness is the one thought to be worn
As you devour your fire; you must let go
Of the heat of what you will come to mourn.

II

Down in your heart, you must find the secret;
It's buried very deep and you need it
To evolve and to express yourself well,
As you aren't possessions so just keep it.



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