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Mistranslations

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MISTRANSLATIONS

Homage to Joseph Cornell

Minstrel/Menstrual: A street juggler in a black and white checked shirt keeps six red wooden balls in the air, and a seventh (today's) balanced on a blue stick balanced on the beginning of his own small nose. He knows.

Open/Oven: Ether may come first, gas or flame, either one. The black cat yawns. A family ferret jerks in a dream. Downstairs the mice are alert. Brenda's propped-up dulcimer hums briefly when tabby slips past. You put your head in the electric refrigerator.

Tachycardia/Cackly ardor: Stichomythia, logomachia, mach 3. Your cheeks stretch like empty used balloons. The music on the wooden stand is typed in braille, six hemispheres infinitely rearranged. Mother replaced the blinds with shutters. A heat attack left the shutters untouched. Her heart attack came later.

He/Key: For five minutes between programs, or between numbers in a larger program, six niblets from an ear of corn were held together by sweet integuments as the gander slipped into the potato hole (or whole). Pearl buttons on the gambler's brocade vest reflect only the chair rail: a game of solitaire.

Easy/Easel: A praying mantis turns the color of winter wheat late in the season—metaphor only: by November all the insects have all but disappeared. Chaplin's two potatoes dance from the tines of stainless forks. Observe the glassy look of enamelled marbles in small-throated glass jars on autumn-colored marble-ized paper: oleographs of symmetrical bacteria dyed with brilliant inks.

Rain/Reign: Crunchy biscotti, speared nuts, cuttys in wine bottles, a blue bench in Oslo, a zebra in the Zurich zoo. "Sure, Rick, right. Anything you say. In Casablanca, you're the king in the cat's pajamas." His eyes are filming with cataracts. Holmes takes a dive in Reichenbach Falls.