Little by little, and also in great leaps,
life happened to me,
and how insignificant this business is.

The response to the columns in which I quote good poetry is always strong, which is another reason to feel sheepish: even with full attribution I'm reaping credit for someone else's genius.

Rocky Raleo creeps into *Brenda Starr*, the soap opera comic strip I've written for twenty-four years. Our heroine, Brenda, quotes poetry and muses on it. Heroes and villains alike use it to woo her.

Recently, a mysterious, dashing man named Ringo, from the fictitious country of Kazoolistan, dazzled her with verse:

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Ringo didn't conquer Brenda, but he did seduce many comics readers who were grateful to discover Rumi and Hafiz.

Newspaper columns, comic strips, and poems may not seem like related literary forms, but they're less different than they look. In their own ways, each of them seeks the same thing: to make meaning in a space whose power lies in always being just a little too short.

the last time we spoke
you told me where we spoke

and from the center like a spoke
from a hub our thoughts we spoke

5757

I LOVE NATURE DAVE COOL

Nature Dave and his peddling Circus
Bee Boomer has a big buzz
Unicorns, Bronies, Young and old folks too
Humboldt crashpad dogs, beers and bikes, ride

Piece of shit

Rare form

Outlandish Apologies

Misery

Infidelity

Sense of safety

Everything ends

Save yourself

Oh, hi! Try not to overthink it
Find some grass and sit on it

Grab a book and plagiarize it
As long as you cite it

They'll say they're okay with it
Even if you later regret it

The first letters of who, what & when are W
when we look into the mirror what we see are double
YOU

Outside the ladies' room what ~~there hangs~~ are W's.
within vacuum and hulu are double V

Twenty four hours in the neighborhood RW
Smile lines on my cheeks in a shape of RW

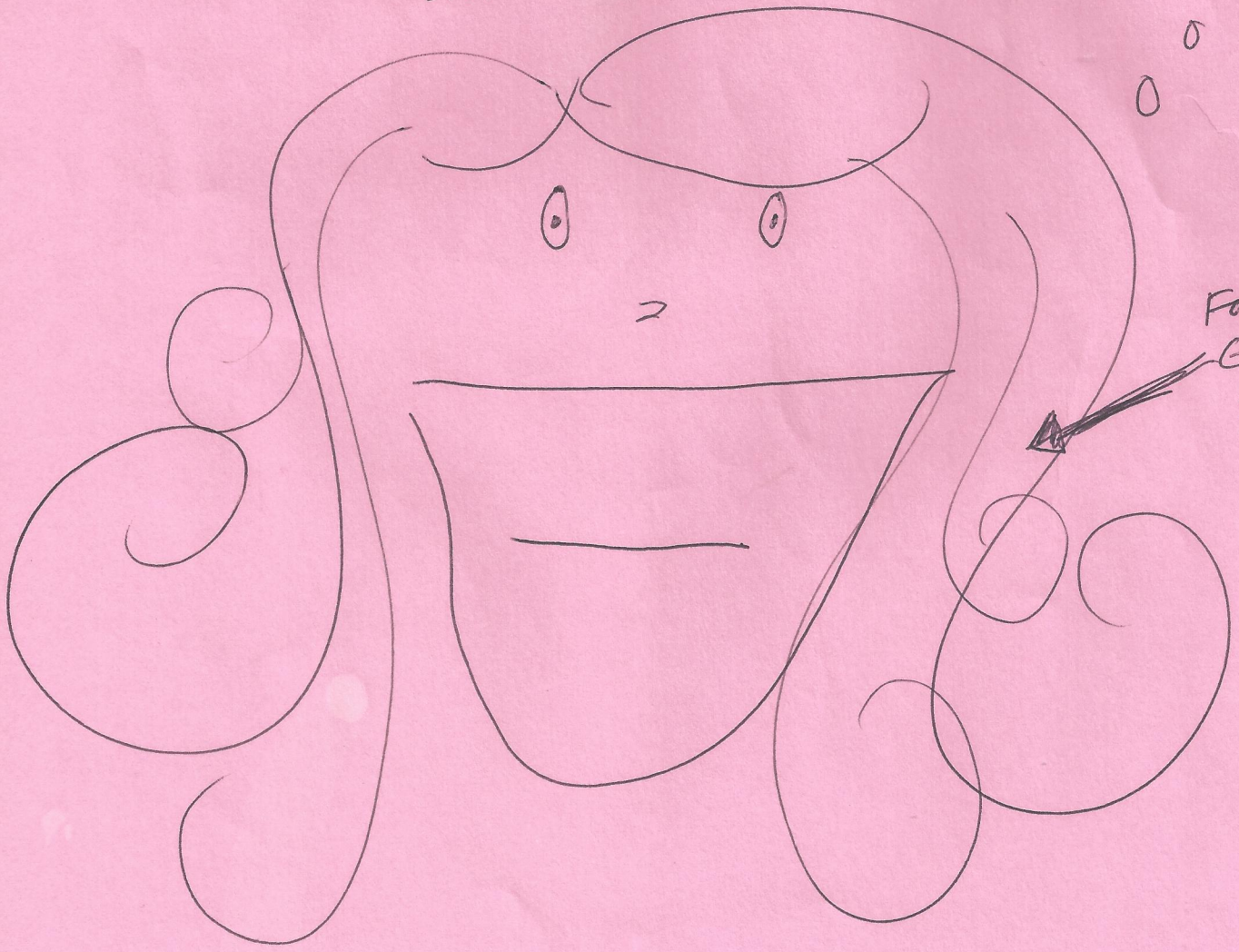
than ever. "I'll supply the art part," he [illegible] offers. Alternatively, he claims, "I'm a liar with a lyre," or, more confoundingly, "I am the crocodile of joy, who never lies" — if a crocodile's tears are false, does that make its smile more or less worthy of our belief? Where he says, beautifully, "My name is Fred Seidel,/And I paid for this ad," does that accept or refuse responsibility, or is it really most like the dubious modern conflation of the two? The last two lines of *Ooga-Booga* warn the reader: "Open the mummy case of this text respectfully./ You find no one inside." And still people queue up to say what a cad Seidel is, what an unpolitically correct bounder.

I said I thought Seidel replaced Lowell's influence with his own, some time in the seventies or eighties. In point of style, I think that's true, but Lowell continues to assert himself in one crucial way: he supplies Seidel with his structural model or blueprint. To put it another way, whatever poem Seidel is writing, it's more likely than not to be "For the Union Dead": even stanzas, uneven lines, occasional heavy rhymes, occasional heavy rhythms, coexistence of private and public themes, the poet in the poem in a cramped or slightly histrionic way ("I crouch to my television set"), the juggling of six or eight different tropes or images, like so many plates kept airborne; in "For the Union Dead" it would include, in no particular order: bulbousness; cars and machinery; the color orange; fish and the marine world; the ditch and digging; shaking; etiolation; the role of possibility or change; race relations; animation and dis-animation. Seidel has written this sort of long-ish, ambitious, polygonal poem many times now; the first time was in the earliest poem, "Wanting to Live in Harlem," in which he makes an *Entwicklungsroman* of his own life: pictures of violins; the "colored" maid; Somerset Maugham-ish lusts; Jews and Romans; Lutherans and Jews; a Gauguin-like palette; a dying mother. He does it differently, less organically, more mechanically. The themes and images tend not to bleed into each other as they do in Lowell; they are checked, kept apart, the effect or the technique is more that of a collage, the lines — it seems — really are sliced off. With Seidel, there is something that feels machined about the writing. Even within his poems, he tends to present himself as a sort of centaur, most often an *homme-machine* on a Ducati, in a hotel, on a Eurostar train, on a plane, on a woman (where he often sounds deliriously mechanical: "Women have a playground slide/That wraps you in monsoon and takes you for a ride"); encased in accoutrements for hunting, or tropics, or formal evening wear; always something

I want something to eat
I missed the time to eat

I keep smelling things to eat
But to smell is not as nice as to eat

I Am really hungry I want to eat
Merodith would ~~Eat~~ to eat



5
7
5
7
7

Community-fueled
PBR, Gatorade and
Twizzlers, marshmallows
The volunteers feed my soul
Sustainable energy

Light-years

It's a beautiful ~~world, you said,~~
~~with these~~ trees, ~~marshes, deserts~~,
~~grasses, rivers~~ and seas

~~and so on~~. And the moon is really ~~something~~
~~in its circuit~~s
~~of relative~~ radiance. ~~Include~~

~~the winged M~~, voluptuous,
~~Venus, hotheaded Mars,~~ that lucky devil
~~J and cranky~~ Saturn, ~~of course, plus~~

~~U and N~~ and the ~~wanderer P, in short~~
the whole solar family, complete with its
~~Milky Way, and count up all the other~~

~~systems with~~ dots and spots and in
that endless emptiness ~~what you've got~~
is a commotion of you-know-what. It's a beautiful

~~universe, you said~~, just take a good look
through the ~~desert's dark~~ glasses
for ~~instance or on your back~~

~~in~~seas of grass, take a good look
~~at the deluge of that Rorschach~~ — we're standing ~~out there~~
~~somewhere~~, together.

Translated from the Dutch by Jacquelyn Pope

This line has five words

Followed by this

adenddum

No

Now done.

This world is cursed by the republicans
They want to take your vote, republicans

Their theory is not to get your vote, Republicans
Their theory is to steal your vote, Republicans

We must fight against these evil Republicans
Vote, Vote & Defeat the cursed Republicans

I ~~am the asian~~ persuasion

The ~~Riverwes~~

Asian Persuasion
River Invasion
Biker Sensation
Constant Elution