

**D U S I E issue 18**

Cover Art and interior collages by Jennifer Pilch

ISSUE EIGHTEEN

ISSN 1661-668

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<http://www.dusie.org/>



*gina* ABELKOP

W-O-R-K N-O

*for Charli XCX and L'wren Scott*

It's the cold dead

office waiting room Charli

It's my feet in wet socks

beneath the desk

and my upbraided overseer

one cube

over It's this

privileged hardship

A country of boredom

A week at a time

On weekends

I'm supposed to pull

weeds I almost hate

everyone here and the whole world

When I leave I come down

come down come down

from it Push away push away

from it Hold my life

hard and suffocating

to my chest on weekends

and evenings Music helps  
it does Charli  
It's why I write this poem  
to you and for you  
I'm meant to answer phonecalls  
Charli but they come only twice  
daily mostly  
solicitors  
and it is hard  
It is hard Charli not to be cruel  
This work makes me mean and cruel  
Even knowing someone  
at the other end  
is being made cruel and mean too  
by the same strangling  
unnatural wires I need a little  
hope Charli I need a little  
pop and that's where you come  
in with your pink black  
gold sonic life raft

L'wren is dead L'wren is dead  
The news makes me feel something  
Some dishonorable grief I have  
no right to L'wren I hope if you are not  
unexisting you are soft and happy  
in the afterlife

L'wren had or  
was thought to have had  
the dream  
job and it wasn't enough Charli  
So what will ever be enough  
for me What will I do here  
Where will I go to everyday  
to make only a little bit  
of money to buy myself books  
dresses and classes to get myself  
away only to come back because  
I want more books dresses  
and classes Now I'm tired  
Charli and it's only your nuclear  
season that's keeping me  
awake alive and wanting

*margaret* BASHAAR

I KNOW I COULD HIT A WOMAN

Open-palmed.

Claws out.

Big vintage ring on my finger

to leave my skin green.

To cause a flinch is good.

Crying, better.

Thumb curled outside the fist

so it does not break.

Split her skin,

mismatch her cheeks.

Knock her to the ground and kick

until a rib breaks.

Throw a sucker punch and keep walking.

## TWEETING @JAMESFRANCO TV WHILE WATCHING SPRING BREAKERS

*All italics are tweets from @mybyacinthgirl dated 12/20/13*

*@JamesFrancoTV you sure ain't from this planet. I'm convinced.*

You're from a whole planet of James Francos.  
Benevolent James Francos, sadistic James Francos,  
James Francos who chew with their mouths open,  
who sit ladylike, who slouch, legs splayed.  
James Francos who know how to bake,  
who win spelling bees, who get arrested  
for public indecency and worse and worse.  
Suburban Eden James Francos, James Francos  
populating farms, milking whatever passes  
for a cow on the planet of James Francos

*I hope that was your real hair, @JamesFrancoTV*

I hope those were your real teeth,  
your real pajamas  
your real skin and tattoos, skin and tattoos.  
You must own a whole wall of machine guns,  
James Franco, or how could you sleep soundly?  
One time I held an elephant gun, one time  
my brother took me to a shooting gallery  
with two handguns and, James Franco,  
I am a really good shot. You can trust me  
with your guns, with your teeth,  
with all that terrifying hair.

*I think every woman who swoons over @JamesFrancoTV should watch this movie. #creepyfacestroking*

If they can look at you, James Franco, with your hair  
in those white boy cornrows, your mouth full of gold,  
your eyes behind sunglasses behind sunglasses behind  
sunglasses, your body covered in another body,  
skin you peeled from strangers, flanked by blonde  
girls in pink bikinis, pink ski masks, pink lips and still  
desire that breath at their neck then that,  
my dear James Franco, that is true love.

*I feel like there's not nearly enough James Franco fellating objects in this film. That would take it into the realm of true high art*

Because these days a blowjob is only risky enough  
when there's a projectile waiting at the end to blow  
the back of your head clean off, not in that pseudo-sexy  
"your cock/load is so big" kind of way but in the way  
you could die die die die die not slow but sudden,  
no little death and I am tired of poets writing about  
little death, James Franco. Never do that to me.  
Write about Frank forever, write about Obama,  
whatever actor you saw across a room, on a balcony,  
face-down in a pool pretending to be for real dead,



but I don't want to hear about the rest of it  
unless you're cumming and going at the same time  
*let's be clear – Franco was fellating the guns*

*So, do the two blonde girls get James Franco's vagina bed? Do they burn his bed? I HAVE SO MANY QUESTIONS*

Do you sleep outside with no mosquito netting  
when it's summertime, look to home? Will you  
one day return to the planet of the James Francos?  
Be replaced by a new James Franco? Will the next  
generation deserve a James Franco in ways mine  
does not? Do you paint and light the paintings  
on fire, play the dulcimer then light the dulcimer  
on fire, cover your body in mud and condiments,  
forget your own name? Don't listen to the naysayers,  
James Franco – they are the ones who bathe daily,  
who haven't clapped their hands in a decade.  
They look into binoculars backwards. They shuffle  
their feet in heels, complain of the sidewalk's cracks.

## THINKING FOR YOURSELF IS A LOST ART AND GOOD RIDDANCE

I will tell you what color nail polish to wear,  
which moisturizer is best beneath your eyes  
and you will learn to paint your own French tips.

Remember the important things: pitch your center  
of gravity forward in heels, do not to skip leg day.  
Clench your jaw until color bursts behind your eyes,  
until you feel heat below your ear like a bleed.

Go on – put that cock in your mouth.  
Then at least there will be one smart thing  
in your pretty little head.

*lisa marie* BASILE

Liana & Morgan

And there it was  
    you with the electric at your hip bone;      sorry.  
At the table a sharp black gush  
    of shimmer,  
or adult                      body so big so revolting  
    you felt the most then.              weep at windows  
where we feel we want to be.              only a window  
    is a window                      not a thing to be wept near.  
a want              as big as meadow.  
    a girl and an electric wand  
reminding                      of days of body and self-in  
self-of,              surfaced  
like a waxy sheen over the days.  
    sweet black damn of holy water  
    and its teeth.  
we gnaw so full at summer night we grow among it  
    soft core white thigh a reminder.  
    hair so course we will it  
    and it comes.              hair like drills  
    into the memory of man,  
two girls at the table  
  
two girls.

## Luisa & Ariadne

in possession it changes  
surfaces as moons do,  
                          body out / regulated by tide  
of man.          a growth of pistil  
as if rearing   in safety of the night.  
in possession it widens  
                  milking as a thing does when sutured,  
a giving,      spooling,      ornamental breasts  
                  a prayer.      we wash this thing  
we call home  
in hope of capture.  
                  we will belittle it until daybreak,  
good girl,                  bread of death.  
                  the last of the white light  
long left with the rope,  
                  mauve curtains  
expose her      white teeth to the headboard

*michele* BATTISTE

Her Medical Archive

slick hand, slick hands  
a souvenir

If only it could all be  
European, we could take  
pictures and no one would mind

A child would think it a red bottle  
It doesn't show the number of strokes  
  (wine-dark  
  boards-broken)

I touch my throat to feel for a pulse certain  
that my lips are white

It shouldn't seem so  
aquatic

separated tissue, glass slide  
(the agent lurking like rust)

If it were more aquatic, she could drift

If only we weren't expecting all data  
to be triangulated

Swampy. that's the word  
I'm looking for

Glutinous, better

A child would think *berries* before  
we turned his head away and smeared  
his palms with honey  
up to his wrists

*from* Ruination

*sugar any sugar, anger every anger,  
lover sermon lover, center no distractor*  
--Gertrude Stein

and the wine, and the beasts, and the butcher's raw  
stock, and the bones on the floor, gnawed to artifacts.

The Y of my body, the brace of bones beneath belly, want  
only want, a fractured skeleton. And your bed, and your belts,

and the view from your window, your shelf of bitters, your  
shoulder a warship, two black beasts guarding the door.

One man said make yourself scarce. Hunger  
feeds hunger, and the scraps aren't yours.

*ruth* BAUMANN

The Moon (XVIII)

A single cactus in an ice storm  
still carries a desert.

You understand the power of invention.

You understand how to close your hands  
& hold the worlds they try to fracture.

Where today cracks, both light  
& many mouthed animals.

The difference between monsters & ideas  
is sometimes clear  
& other times none.

## The Magician (I)

Mud resettles into water & dirt.

A girl, staring into a field,  
sees the grass.

A field, staring into a girl,  
sees itself.

These are both properties of power.

When you ask about the future,  
the universe speaks in origins.

Look at your hands.  
From them, whole systems of dreaming  
emerge.



*deborah* BLAKELY

Introduction to Conversational French

The fortune teller asks if the tattoo  
of the vagina on your forearm is mine.

You answer, "this is not the last poem  
I'll write." I ask for six words

written in black, directions intrusive as in-laws.

I get upset sometimes--  
choke confessions from fishnets,  
from mulberry trees,

demand laughter  
from alibis.

All good people,  
in good time,

look for clues on flesh.  
In tongue.

Swallow enough crimson syllables  
and the needle will point

to pencil. Something erasable,

mutable as this forest of eloquent endings  
where everything is French.

Let me predict the future:  
*vous passez comme le rouge à lèvres d'hier.*

*julia* BLOCH

[from "Contract Method"]

Can you believe that the sun has eyes? In the mirror and I am ready, I am reading my own face & hair, I see my eyes like first time I said, that I am ready, hips thighs etc. Knee in a brace and child knee. Facetime me. In the mirror stones & blue fire, purple fibers @ my neck, rain jamming the windows of the officespace, I am reading my own fist, run slap on pavement like dust-n-hail the words are hurried & we're here

just listening to the good girl mixtape. In December the rain pushes all the glyphosate and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons down into the ground and Quailwood takes you all the way to Saddleback. Something's pinker than the lens would allow, no I don't think it's supposed to be that pink, no it shouldn't be that pink, that pink is an alarm, there's something infected in the glass, there's a weight getting attached to that pink in the glass, it's not just about waiting for the rain but different, a valley is a 'depressed angle,' it should not be pink there, it should not look like pink right there, it should just not be it should be *stripped clean*

but this ink is full of dread. Flyaway. The new job, the new laptop, the torqued sacroiliac joint, the heat. Can't have cake. Can't have soda. Can't have beer. Can't have coffee. Can't look available. Can't click open. Can't hear the other one. Throw things to the flood. Everybody's hoarding everything all the time.

We welcome your questions and concerns and would like you to feel free to call during office hours to discuss them. You have to feel the federalism in your hands. No camera, just a heart beating fresh. You're allowed to write on wintry streets as long as you store Bakersfield in a single cell in the lung. You have to pray to the high priestess. You have to stop staying still. You have to see it in the corner of the paper room. You have to chart

the phases and light a crystal. I'm just writing the words anybody could write; there's nothing special or important here. This TV is full of new colors; South Street is fully mirrored now so they're taking pictures outside the apartment; the affect is in the sliver.

I was popular, and I was lovely, and I played beautifully, and looked beautiful. But when I played in the evening I was sore in les yeux. I felt nailed thru the eye all the way to the back of the wall. She thought in whole sentences as the apartment filled with the river. Measured the round of the sink, the cut of the window, the hover inside that old wall. Wanted to leave the flat city, wanted back inside the valley between the new walls of resin that emit the standard levels of formaldehydebecause of triple "the"s in prior sentence. Always adding and subtracting

as a contractual method. A lung behind the ribcage, the want both bigger than body & completely contained w/in it. So the want is actually a pillar, built of both natural and synthetic materials, pushing forward from the spine to the breastbone. Backbends are good for the fear of death the yoga teacher says. Breathe into the lung behind your ribcage, put your hands on the pillar and drag the spine down to the floor, and see—the pillar won't move. So the room won't fall

through this square of air. But it's trying to weld paper to skin. Just here in the officespace with glossy ladies and something bad on your shirt. They say put that feeling inside that tube, there. Blood in the needle and safe as houses. Then, run across the carpet. These are all the things that add up to formula. The institution makes a promise; then, you sign a contract; then, the institution makes another promise which is the promise of the institution. But then there's a crack in the pillar, no the other pillar, the one holding up the parking garage next door where there is no validation. The first pillar still won't move even when the rain rises in the street. The officespace is starting to crumble; go to 36th Street for coffee. All the birds are leaving right now. Wait, wrong season. The birds are

coming back, like every dumb spring. He put away death inside his thigh,  
Simone says. Don't save the love for the thing

—get out from underneath those pillars where the light's too bright. On  
4th Street the studio's hot like a muscle and the pillar props up the spine  
with a dark piece of plastic beneath the kidney. The body is particular, in  
all its animate parts, and there's this red cord between the two bodies, but  
it all comes down to the thing, sorry. About those teeth

and all the bad lipstick. 'I gambled with love, and in its stead I found  
status anxiety,' Kevin says. Here in our home, one person maintains the  
charts and the other person holds the slab of wood up above the pillars.  
The charts are made out of moveable pieces of paper but the pillars are  
permanent at their coordinates in space. The charts are numbered  
according to the civil calendar but the pillars are actually more lunar.  
There's a crystal in the lung. Because moon always wins. Burn the charts

because Los Angeles is a Sagittarius and Philadelphia is a Scorpio. The  
pillar gets cut. 'It was what I wanted now,' Constantina says. I don't  
know what comes next: blood or salt, the beating house or the center. A  
contract extracts value by capturing the future. So we're waiting for the  
contract

filled with fake museums for all your favorite memories. My necklace is a  
rope I tie it and untie, Lorde sings. There is no temperature regulation  
here, the whole building just sort of drifts in shitty rhythm, no picking up  
on the cues of any of the bodies in the building, bodies that drift up and  
down the stairwells, ymight as well disappear, the stairs straining in the  
dark, boxes and boxes lifting and settling into our lower bodies, deep into  
37th Street, somewhere above our faces scent trail of fake fur laced with  
rose wood and that whole 'ruined scene.' A building shutting down like  
the lower parts of a body

each cloud denser than the last. So go not on your nerve but on your last disaster. Breathe cultivated air, eat beautifully cured olives, tell too much to the damp house next door, mist her ferns. Then guy on Walnut Street leans in real close and says 'I'd fuck the shit out of you.' Miss several beats as if this day weren't already long enough, shutter it down, cook it down and eat it because whatever cruelty. Flickering on the plastic

outlines the point of a limb or finger. Flickering is a light going on & off like luxury. Light is motion but here the plastic is totally in color. And infected, too, and heavy, but those are other words for a different room. For now just flickering as in an opening & before a closing, a flickering is an effort, an effort is kind, and kindness is a link. A loop—no, that's broken. A motion in light that points to something outside of itself as two figures have come apart now. A kind of anaphora.

Make a depression & you have a vessel. A vessel is an image, an image is multiple, the image gets sorted, gets sore, it feigns order, the vessel tips, it sorts things out, but not all things or all holes. This is a work of critique and a work of response & can't hold it so here's a vessel. To contain add weight and lift. Spill it all over the floors a kind of varnished remain. The sonnet is a stupid form Bernadette says; that's not how anyone really thinks. Timing is a semaphore.

*jenny* **BOULLY**

*The satchel empty by the time the fall falls around*

The satchel empty by the time the fall falls around: That was the point of it all to have the empty. Once there was a snowfall and that had been an adventure but the teachers wouldn't let us go outside to feel it. I had wanted very badly to feel it. By the time our mother showed up to get us my sister and I there was hardly anything left a little snowbird—or so—it seemed stuffed into a crook of a tree. The letters they tried to teach me I could only learn if they were pretty. There had been some letters that were pretty. The G was glittery grape easily traced. I had tried to learn and be good but the teachers did not like me and the boys had wanted to harm me and so that is why I said that the cake was baked before the ingredients were even mixed so I could escape recess. It has been so long now since I was punished for having drawn the poodle dog before anyone even told me. The world is waving and fluctuates. There was a cost I am now learning. There had been a consequence and then there wasn't. There was more to bear. My daughter—I have grown I realize so old—presses her face to the glass. When I'm that close she says it's purple outside.

megan BURNS

ANACONDA

“the border is not necessarily a margin” *Pushing Water*, Charles Alexander

the doll embodies extremes  
mouth in awe, a contest of leggery  
easily excitable she spaces like any woman  
a vulva can be simulated by any crevice  
even tears  
gendered to be a not erotic but worth branding  
folds of dollar bills a raining  
she sips uncanny: crawls around collared  
displays a good disposition  
Nik says, he loves that fat ass  
& it's true: if the body is a sentence  
it balances between disgust: don't want none  
and separation: look at her...  
dismantled the gaze retorts when a licking  
hits millions, a girl can laugh if she's not a real girl  
if she's not a real girl, and there are no real  
girls in this vision of perfection  
the best parts tell us simply of violence  
we spend a lot of time viewing art that doesn't arouse us  
how many times have we looked at her butt, Becky?  
it's so round, it's so out there, what I most enjoy about  
this man's portrayal is the subtle pitting of women against women  
based on race and body type...  
this is what Walter Benjamin refers to when he tells us  
alienation reaches such a degree that we can experience it as aesthetic pleasure  
what hollows a woman, another he tells us art is where we enjoy  
our symptoms: racing we continue the dialogue but change  
narrators: tell me Becky's friend, in the silence you now hold  
how does it feel to be called a skinny bitch? Is this the way  
we nail down progress. I've been reading nothing but pornography  
to clear the way for backward context: the butt is not a sexual organ  
under the mantle of power we still trill to titillate to be seen  
and we think we have a way of looking but all these treasures  
are already owned: little girls, listen closely  
there are no bedtime stories about the rapeable body  
they all are

*caroline* CABRERA

To transitions, I say, *Namaste, Bitches*

I would rather sing you to sleep for the rest of your life than admit how many houseplants I have let wither under my watch. Even now dust settles on the rug, only to be picked up again when the a/c switches on. Do you know the teen hours I spent un-contented with my face, my frame? How it felt to never be picked from a crowd at a mall, brushed with powder, called lovely. Then one day you get a brain. Or you have a brain, and one day someone points to it, says *look at this little terrarium*. The body is a process is a product is what I clothe today in cotton for coolness. Reader, where the fuck are you? Here I stand dressed, not quite to the nines, but dressed, anyway. After collecting two years in a home I love, it is time to thin the herd of my attachments and go West in a romantic gesture for bigness. Possibility. Boo-hoo I say to you and to myself, a vessel, small but seaworthy. I run farther and faster than I imagined possible and start to think it means something. My husband cut free the paddles from an abandoned Cuban-refugee boat. Two sets, each handmade by different hands. The paddles, longer and heavier than you are imagining, stand in corners in my house, one set near the front door and the other at the back. As if to say, we are going somewhere. As if no one will die in the shelter of my love.



## Sister House

I tilt my head forward to get lost in the complex forest of my hair. Love is saying, *how much do you think my head weighs* and receiving an earnest guess. My husband vowed so many things that only matter if we are in the same place. Without him, I coat chicken thighs in flour, buttermilk. No matter your worry, my advice is the same: move from your chest. Without my husband, my sister and I lie on the couch and read aloud about sharks and epidemics. We push our clothes together in a massive closet. One part of me is gone from here and one cannot imagine leaving. Another part searches my husband's drawers to find unsent thank you notes, shards of glass, and a self portrait as pretty young thing. I remember all the ways he has looked. Love is knowing all of someone's clothes. Tell me anything and I can make you a timeline for it. If you say *Katherine the great white shark*, you are always calling her *Katherine the Great*.

*k. jane* CHILDS

→Conditional→Connective→

i can resist my own body's debilitating attraction to your dying flesh

bleached tattoos, beached on the wreckage of your rolled sleeves, my first love was a carpenter, also my first husband, there are lathed rivulets and scrimshaw vacancies in my bones as well

if you hear the echoes back from the bluelight and shadow pierced shavings of love muscles, dusted and seared, my drippings also gifts from ex-junkies and angels

i can't always control the way i burn, but if the fumes are noxious, i'm reassured you'll never learn

if we wind ourselves, tight like a bowtie, wound, loose later, lose, lost, router the edges of our own misguided histories

carve out a candle, unlit, in the dark

if i am tentative, tender, flammable, bare: knotted cotton on the floor of the cellar again

then

then then

then

*wendy* CHIN-TANNER

LAPSARIAN

Spring, the first nectarines of the season  
have come but the purple callas lilies

I tucked for winter in the sod have not  
survived, eaten from below by moles. I

try not to take it as a sign: of cradle  
becoming grave, gravid earth gone

suddenly birthless, barren after  
deflowering, devouring. Lapsarian:

I've seen what lies beyond these garden gates.

## FEMARA

is an oral non-steroidal aromatase inhibitor inhibiting estrogen.

Femara is used by male bodybuilders to achieve peak muscular tone and by

post-menopausal women to treat breast cancer. In pre-menopausal women,

suppression of estrogen tricks the adrenals into pumping out more

to goad the ovaries, taunting, plumping, primping. No coincidence that the gland

for fight or flight is the site of potential motherhood. If you tell me I can't, I'll

do it or die trying. I swallow my pills. My follicles lay one enormous egg.

Bok Bok Bok means white in Cantonese, the color of mourning. Morning

is the best time to test your pee and practice the piano. Maybe Bach,

that brutal arithmancy:  $37 + 39 =$  Infertility.

## EIGHT

it was as

it was that

labored night

thunderheads

sumac red

bursting black

dividing

sky last night

she laid her

burning head

in the dip

between my

hip and rib

somnolent

returning

*lisa* CICCARELLO

from "*Chief!*"

All chief wants is to go swimming,  
drive around town.

She's given up eating:  
too time consuming.

*Don't some of us still have a job to do?*

Just take off your glasses,  
get back in the water.

She has a best friend  
she avoids  
who drugs herself  
like a flower.

Even with her shoes off  
her feet sound like heels —  
that kind of beautiful.

Still, when she dies,  
she is the most beautiful  
she has ever been.

& chief is sorry to see her go.

Someone promotes chief  
on her behalf  
but she declines.

She wants to carry a gun,  
stay with her men,  
one of whom comes when he is called  
until he doesn't.

He is bleeding under his shirt.  
*My hands*, he says  
*are not coming back*.



*s marie* CLAY

*That fan like sound coming from the sky...  
childhood has no place here*

*-anonymous Palestinian girl*

**Dear Palestine,**

Say that 90%  
of the body is  
ocean drowning

inside your  
nativity. It too  
wants to swim

wants to close  
the screaming  
anemone gap  
in the sky

just as the trees  
inside your lungs  
want to climb out

as synonym, as  
fatherless  
as stalactite

Most mornings  
begin like this,  
rubbing the red  
anthills from your  
eyes

listening for funnel  
clouds to develop into

helicopters propelling  
the world away from  
your elbow,

precision making  
and unmaking.  
Say the stars are ungodly,

say the twinkling  
is dynamite and  
tonight is a short  
fuse.

Say it to the  
minutemen who you  
couldn't tell apart,  
who couldn't tell you  
apart from the neatly  
parted lawn

wet and dark until  
opened  
like seeds.



Beauty Cannot be Eaten with a Spoon  
*-Romani proverb*

Today the table has set itself. In Romani, *I love you* is translated as *I eat your heart*, as

embroidered swan, neck unfurled as napkin just for me and even though I am only one third

of this park bench, my love is this park; as caravan, as flute-tree, as unleashed as Ambrosia.

*Make love* meaning *stay where there are songs* meaning stand beside yourself in constant combustion

rhythm& blues & floret yourself because to love doesn't have to make sense like wet grass me.

Pyre me. As morning takes flight, catapult your eyes into me and victory.

*stella* CORSO

I WOULD KISS YOU BUT THERE'S MEAT IN YOUR TEETH

and much around me has slackened

with due sickness

my humps    my lumps

my lovely lady polyps

this internal shift

from years of skimping    on the means

of amassing    amass

a    mass

\*\*\*

Now I can't pretend

it's not a case of the mean reds

the fiercest fuschias

that makes me want to smash this glass

through a window

break it apart

\*\*\*

I have a body        it is oddly shaped

two melons and four sticks of licorice

if you're sweet on licorice

        better check your adrenals

and this too will soon spoil

a symptom    then

        a systematic flowering

\*\*\*

If there's a heartbeat in my belly

it's only my lunch breathing

## *b.v.* CRAMOND

### Shooter

make yourself homely  
not the word itself  
how you say the word  
ah you're such a good

whatever  
I predict we'll be anesthetized  
aggravated into submission  
she's sick that's very  
nice if she feels like it

not consciously  
in the first place racial outpourings now  
at hand sullen does  
she say that about me but  
they also have another position  
I hope we don't see you  
next week yesterday

escape vague drape  
I mean well I mean that's fine  
the under take  
so you're here  
heeeey, good

this is American feel  
hurricane participle  
cut fury crest detonate  
in a jiffy and then happily

that's just one person  
it smells it just smells like  
snide brick hung on the wall  
vehement interpretation

we never had that implicit collection  
godforsaken  
language assembled  
it's so not worth it for what I make  
it got ended awe clap

so you did what you were supposed  
to adore ogle persecute

great grasp past tense  
secrete ember shoot

she's often always heard best  
over duress pester  
split corpus seams heartless  
run it's the beginning



*caroline* CREW

*SAINT DWYNWEN*

and you are believed to have been a daughter

a daughter to whom the father is wanting as a result  
of the son and of the son he is the father and of the father  
the woman is not to be born but born the woman is all  
and so patron of the father and of the son that is to say  
patron of lovers although one does not become patron  
of lovers without fire untrue one does not become patron  
of anything without fire and so ice is to the quelling as the father  
is to the daughter and she born is not cold but quelling  
she loving the patron is not ice but cold and he the patron  
not he the father until he the father is the he the heavenly  
father to which she the daughter to whom the father is wanting  
prays though who will she pray to now she is patron  
and though there is love to be forgotten it is not of the father  
but rather by the father and in the ice there is that which you  
will love again you the daughter and you the patron to whom  
the prayer is not cold but ice to you whom ice is fire but undying

*PLASTIC SONNET 12*

My pride painted gold & arted:  
clavicle horror, breast growth, long  
wild toes. When you crown me  
with a great pomegranate describe  
the human eye & show its indirect centre —  
I want you to soften in this heat.  
The maximum value of this love  
as shown in this figure  
is also named love & is love.

*olivia* CRONK

from "Middle Mansion"

The whole day had tasted like rotten make-up, a melting, bus-riding feeling.

But in between was a suited man in the forest and collecting a silky flush of titted animals.

I came into the space and understood. There were many private shelves  
ontowhich I unloaded that shit  
and uponwhich I arranged the animals: absolutely grey with rot, little sloping smiles.

I am re-imagining us now in an insect rain, come in to a farmhouse, an apocalyptic  
escape hatch, into some money  
from when

This is the story.

It is disgusting.

It is underbirds gnawing on a skin cloak, pulling and tearing  
with the viciousness of a big daddy.

It is violet.

A mouse chews through a wire.  
The mirrored tiles, narcotizing,  
and it cannot cannot cannot be missed  
what.

In other words, the room was.

The room was a space for cartoons and sick bugs.

A mouse chews and chews into a fat dead man.

The kids lie on the mirrored tiles in their brushed hair.

A phone is ringing, even though the wires are chewed. Ring ring.

*tracy* DIMOND

## Existential Glitter-Vomit II

I do not bubble / rarely want to smile.  
I dress as projection,  
then dress for protection.

Upward mobility?  
So bent over from this *leaning in*.  
And my knees! Worn to the floor.  
Body like trees that look the same  
until you notice their bend.

Upward mobility? Ha!  
Where do you grocery shop?  
Remember the days —

## GET OFF AOL SOMEONE MIGHT CALL.

There is so much expanse because sky.  
When clarity is the goal  
I feel silvery gray,  
like the concept of hair vs. age.

Time did *this* to me.  
Time can take *it* away.  
I am ready to throw  
my body in front of a truck.

## Existential Glitter-Vomit

I am a revolutionary project.  
Put on a beauty patch and  
change my mind.

Five minute hair,  
five minute identity.

Do you like my old soul?  
I am not smiling for your  
pink pharmaceuticals.

But I'm so fresh—

Eating toothpaste,  
chugging mouthwash.

Every day feel like  
a weapon of mass destruction  
marketed for the 11 o'clock news.

I am approaching an age  
where getting it together  
is a furniture display.



*jenny* DRAI

[ a little bit gone ]

But when I close the door

A physical space meaning *want*

Getting used to 'it,' whatever

description means

Yesterday:

A stone sea of waves, and then light fell to the left

of the tiller and I sneezed      Today:

here or there, then or now

The sea-night firmament, dishes of mended broken stars

And told you 'it' was very sad, indeed hopeless

without a beginning or an end

I couldn't make my bombsight / wanted to cover myself in pure wax

[ Youngsters have old eyes ]

[ The philosopher's speech was dull and quite jejune ]

I said, 'don't write it down'                      :                      on your wife's  
sleeve

[ a new genre of honest phrases ]

the falling sound of standing trees

:

not original to the body, but origin to the self

:

don't drink the water, don't say who you  
are, here, near the door of the anchorage

:

not escaping the personal : the b-side of history

:

three emotions walk out onto a sand bar, cross each other, equatorially

:

the involved perception couldn't be bothered to signal ahead

:

excise nothing : remain in control

:

cut out the bend of the wound : glue meaning to bones

:

personal syntax is a grammar from illness

:

to measure scars of the body against injuries of being

:

the entropy of the self, no, not entropy, but occasional malfeasance

:

cerise is a shadow along two planes of the ribs

:

or, three novels later, still writing about schism :  
intersects : schism

:

"soul," which lies in a pelican's beak : adjustable,  
available for later

:

month of birdsong, weather, new anvils

:

bled rose petals, incantation, nightmares of hallways

:

a blue sky is soon to be tone

:

believe me, the underscore of beauty is a split-open beauty  
: [ fracture ] : [ beauty ]

:

I love a little kelp fly in the fog this morning

*lily* DUFFY

from *STRUNG MIMED NIGHT*

Three lines skittish looking down have  
a lot to try for when I  
say so. Let them wholly fritter, bend  
in the hole bend of nausea I can't  
sputter

watch my sister sleep watch a bug crawl in her mouth sit long enough to watch it  
die

Your dress at this height is a monetary exchange I won't cry for it won't stand  
purpled in its rudimentary light

All this to be  
spat on

All this  
grab a spade

Ask about me. Little adult-faced girl facing backward not crying, not sorry, not

impeding traffic naked

from the water-tower facing forward, fully understanding the head to be gotten

off in permutation what is

permutation

Thought about tits. Here

they are, neat. Could

remove, cast in

resin, cut tiny slits for

marbles,

won't.

Not even little. Very actually lofted. Could certainly marry into a  
literate ruin.

I love my own hand better before it strikes and is not what I am here for.

More than one way  
to phase out a grammar.  
Today I beat its ankles

This month was  
the extra one — saw his  
protrusion vomiting into  
the snow, started  
talking to it

This was all my  
own snow, completely  
pre-furnished. How  
could he

Now to excavate the grandfather this won't take all freaking day

What with the apartment

My sponsor hiding under a chromed-out woodpile shirks the bucket, its torrential  
fraternity

Grandfather's premature foot on the brake

Seen exiting the club

Stiletto in the mouth

A cod-like quality about the face

A quality that can be trusted as it will not call my phone

Restricted in its vena cava like my sponsor, fattening beneath the woodpile. Later we will  
say so

And supervise my daughter's eyebrow-plucking

Knowing her by the neck

I in my thousand bodies dining on churches

My neighbor prawn-faced in her

assless girdle

Over there combing the wood

Won't be needing any of that brill cream will we

That murmur  
That pivot  
That treefall  
That fawn  
That plank

Won't be needing any of

That limb  
That rudder  
That hook  
That hassle  
That pasture  
That tint

Won't be needing

That birch  
That fawn  
That fixture  
That ditch  
That coin  
That mouth  
That slit

Will we  
Will we



There were legitimate questions. For one, how my lame dog climbed the stairs  
in such heat.

For two, where was he going? I don't have  
stairs. The sisters slept all day in their sweat

-soaked bed and I haven't much to say about it. Better check on that  
kettle.

None of this dull malice turned-out like witch knees. Whole day not listening gets the brag, the  
thumbprinted throat. That kettle

*natalie* EILBERT

## I AM NOT A CHRISTIAN AND SO I WISH THEM HARM

How often was she told as a girl that cats were in fact good swimmers.

Who could blame her disbelief.

And so it came as something of a shock to watch a tabby emerge from the East River glistening with the sick of their men.

The joke became that each time a woman couldn't articulate the truth of their calamities, another man died.

The next joke became did they take turns cutting out the other's tongues.

The third joke is the old joke of women's great silence, United Silence of Americas.

Cat got your tongue.

Another man tumbles down a cliff with the storied heft of buffalo.

Gray bubbles erupt from the disease of falling down.

This is not the story one wishes to tell.

This is more like handing the hemline of a gown to a puma.

One would like to beg for mercy now but one can't.

In a world without men there is no need for mercy.

Even the boys grow up to be men so still, they die.

Such great numbers disappear that one hardly believes in death anymore.

As a girl a man rolled up her shirt after crushing her to the floor with his body.

Somewhere another man collapses to his knees, seizes, and he falls back as his pants darken with his terrible release.

Then the man lifts her from the tiles and throws her on the pee-soaked mattress.

The joke is that women won the war on women.



Blue.

Someone requests Bach as he bleeds out.

There are routines and then there are rituals.

The beauty of infection is its unending will for change, but the paradox of its endless appetite is how it negates change to regulate the world to a system of hunger.

The next day at school, the girl paints a canvas so thick with blue, the paper tears under the weight of its material.

It is not the same blue but darker made darker.

But blue is not a color now, it is only belief frozen into the shock of change, and so it makes no difference.

The girl develops a paralyzing fear of dark blue storm clouds.

She misses her bus.

The paint doesn't dry for a week.

Years later she will write with the deep worry it was only the color she saw.

No man.

No men.

How long does this go on.

Forever.

Not forever, she replies.

## MY MAIDEN NAME IS

I fell out of my mother slick as a gosling.  
My mother fed me her last name, I chewed  
its nipple off as she pet my soft pretty skull.

Afoot. Something is. How many. History  
tells me a soul is nothing without a name.  
We slaughter and enslave the nameless  
because history slept through its amnesty.  
I own a parrot, I own several parrots, they

die on their perch. We because I. Slip me  
the ribbon with a surname and I'll open  
my legs. What happens to a body when  
it thinks it must be renamed. Which node  
and which nerve and which joint apologizes  
to the work of material. It is interesting,

the mother on the other side of creation  
decorates her girl and softens her hair  
and lightens her face and dabs her brow  
and places rocks over a wife-gown in the woods  
so it won't drift away, just mildew and darken  
and darken and mildew. And the mother

and the mother and the father remove  
her name from herself. Her kitten falls  
asleep in a deathnook, the body tangled  
around the timing belts no longer a kitten.  
The mother-blouse pushes up. Ass up  
in an oldsmobile. Only facts can express  
a sense, a class of names cannot. I own

nothing but the leather seat fused to my  
summer thigh and I've owned nothing  
since. My maiden name is god teen.  
It is natural to confuse the arguments  
of functions with the indices of names.  
I named a cat *kitten* and she ran away.  
A man made me in the night, my eyelids  
blinked ash and the moon wasn't even full.

## WAR PAINT

Driven through the rubble I become the automatic  
hum of a fly. What is the hum of a fly. *Translator:*  
I signed away what portion of me be whored,  
my ass soft and firm soft and firm beneath my pelvis.  
Driven through the empty city which part of me tenors  
itself to ramshackle: Now I am without a body or,  
Now I am without sight to see. Sometimes it is like no thing at all.

I wanted to be beckoned into the scene—any scene.  
Now I can't understand. Now I won't understand.  
It is just that. When I define rhetoric as an argument  
to the orphans I insist there must be an argument, there  
has always been an argument as long as there has been rupture.

Two images felled so that the ground must chatter, argue, freeze.

Be the image forming them together again.

Someone is driving me

to a place they have simply defined as Place. I wonder  
how the poets are doing now that I have become the creator  
of man. I look for Richard Siken under a rock but what  
I'm actually searching for is horse mane to weave together  
his bones, the smoke of burnt porkchops. I do this for each poet,

bind him to the inventory of his modes until a hand reaches out  
and tells me *Quit It, I'm Sleeping*. I had a King once  
and an altar for my King. We slept by a river / he fingered me to sleep.

His cock the onset of a mission to fuck the plague away

but insofar as memory is the briny royalty of being alive

only his cock was King, the rest spilled out.

I lay his bones in a sack. I labeled the sack, *Sac*.

Should I have buried my dead, ruptured the ground to demand  
new rhetoric—no I should not have. My driver shouts over the engine

that so long as I can squeeze my cunt I am surviving this.  
There is nothing right about a scene once it has been deemed a scene.

It is like the word *Icon* whose root is *image* and which can never  
stand again to simply be an image. Like my love for men

who never did harm me, they are the scene of disaster, the equine  
slope of their bodies bent over, the gray balls which serve  
no secrets, no guesses. I grow seeds in me too, the rumble of the engine

scatters away my seeds like so many flies in a trashcan disturbed.  
I am squeezing my cunt and twisting the hem of my dress into  
a weapon. With used tampons we dress our faces in warpaint  
but there is no war to fight, there is only the small argument  
behind our teeth which we discern to be the peace in owning  
our bodies, there is simply the scene and its simpering  
lapse into film.

You see history has always owned our bodies.  
I don't want to own my body you see.  
My stubborn hold on the women who can no longer

replace iconography with power. It is a truth universally acknowledged  
that we are only the sum of our traumas if we be in want of our traumas.

I call my traumas by their Christian names to remove exaggeration  
from the scene. Specificity balms people to either side of a story.  
Ben Mike Ryan Ben Mike Ryan Ben Mike Ryan Ben Mike Ryan.

You see I have recorded the fall as a document to teach us  
what exactly. Women will always need to be taught a lesson, the driver shouts.

I am building the men in this truck of assumption. I say their names. I squeeze.  
I breathe their names into the cunt clay, let the brine spill.

# *brooke* ELLSWORTH

## Readjust

The notdemon had hoped  
to build up the intended cross-fire.  
*I told you*

Uncharted water, mountains or thrown  
deeply in. I have desire  
even at the tail of extreme possibility. *If only*

*it means existence if only the dilemma is how we must confront personhood and at the same time live with other people.*

If we look at  
the agendas that are Magellan-hopefuls. *Those mother fuckers.*

On a visit to Bas Landsdorp: *Explain why this will be a 1-way flight.* Why are you so hostile,  
just  
deliver the letters.  
After spending time in a weaker gravitational field it will be impossible to readjust, says  
Landsorp.  
*What do you know.* Successful

applicants will be trained in the energy of recycled and extracted *being-for-death*. Successful  
applicants will read their own trees. *But is this realistic,*  
*to be supposed that individuals could live without neighborly phenomena.*

*Reads just like heaven.* To be supposed this capacity by which we reconstruct past experience. *To*  
*be supposed I told you continues to float in the air.*

*Oh wait you've seen this passage this is the I'm right passage*  
*I told you*

continues to *float in the air without change in its present state.*

*To apply one must stream to be supposed the intimate cavalry.*  
Every 2 years I keep waiting.

*One must keep waiting she says in order that you may join the floating in air.*



## Forever Kills

What is the name of this magical procedure  
*me gusta* my ^^\_^^ *I Love You Too*  
*but* the yes/no ratio is just too high Yallah  
*Anne stay with me* gust  
a zzz when she said a rose in the crotch zzz  
Au maelström festival his/her royal highness All sides  
I'm breaking up with you what in the world  
did I want to see xoxo names the boat *Habibi*  
did you forget about me she grieves

Chew

*In order that you may join the floating in air x 1000*  
chewed by a child x 1000  
cyanide seeds  
or just 8 seeds  
chewed by an adult

the waste x produces

when a closed-door briefing in a heightened alert. After the far exterior marking on the envelope in this case was not outwardly *suspicious*.

The letter was found in a routine inspection of the forest.

*The letter intended for the middle of.* Castor beans are at times more toxic than cyanide x 1000

Hey,

just 8 seeds chewed can be liminal.

alert the child of the closed-door

chewed by a child, or just 8  
seeds painted  
everybody else does  
*This changes everything*

*betsy* FAGIN

one for all

pressed into service  
liking people deeply  
and wanting to disrupt  
the day with kindness

indict the system and fly  
or flock of an evening  
exactly like yes-people  
who make categories

to spatialize these unregulated  
end times of lifted restrictions  
king crowns crushed  
dismissive extracts of tears

infused into other beverages  
with the smell of mint  
or vanilla for eating,  
lavender for laundry—

that's proprietary information—  
the ratio of shells to person  
perceived as threat  
shell the whole family

thank you, fear

ruled that flow  
rights all magnified  
crossed my neck stone  
called respect chain  
collar what you see  
is your projection

fat wallet guilt  
seaside retreat tiled  
floor with salted  
asphalt questioning  
what if and how much  
to appreciate

love your relationship  
choice sorts feuds  
a world gone warmed  
drinking in candle light  
sky light cubed moon roof  
eating snake nature

to transform ambience  
fear hikes, bank runs  
with smoothed jazz  
elevated culture of need  
to detour through magical  
change back to steeled

to internal reflection  
a cathedral of brown  
and black left us  
to trace motives  
wanting to live  
forever

as standard  
question form  
trying to be nice  
to the sax solo–  
get along  
New York's alright

*jen* FITZGERALD

## Poetry is the Mind at Work on an Impossible Problem

I only know everything  
after poetry is true, was uttered sequentially  
in a graduate class, an epigram.

It struck me then as it strikes me now  
because of the futility of “impossible problem.”  
If there were such things, could we drag our bodies from one’s constellation  
of possibilities to the next?  
If there were such things, could we devote a sacrificed life to an unanswerable question?

Impossibility is not happenstance but a florescence of the mind. It is a lilac garden  
forever about to bloom in a lighted and lightening morning.

Yes, it was the prosody of “impossible problem” that resonated; the fat, rounded sounds  
of problem, impossible,  
and the cut of impenetrable.

*leora* FRIDMAN

PRAYER FOR LAYNE

Do you have  
a color

that you like  
to wear?

I am a queen  
when I see you,

in all of my  
beige.

I don't  
rule right.

Something grows  
from my side

that keeps  
me hungry

but it  
is not birth.

I am still  
not a birth,

just a swelling  
wondering if

the earth swells  
just like me

or I am at fault  
for growing

beyond environmental  
expectations,

saying my name  
too loud.

Blessed of  
the earth,

may we  
live skintight

may these  
be the bodies

we lie in  
tonight.

*vanessa* GABB

Man with Avocado

He eats an avocado  
With salt and saves half  
For her  
Before long the avocado browns  
This is how he knows  
It has passed  
Through his hands  
He has halved it  
And opened it  
To the elements  
She watches him  
Hand her halves  
He says listen  
She says just let me be  
Here just no  
He says eat  
They fray  
In pieces  
See how velvet  
See how ripe  
It is  
She knows he is trying  
For metaphor  
She knows he is  
Saying let us stop all this  
Love me  
I am here love me  
Our beauty  
Lies in our perishability  
It is this  
Short life  
The death of it  
That is supposed to move  
See its impermanence  
Is what is  
If never to vanish  
If never to fade away  
What would the avocado be  
But she misunderstands him  
When he gives



Her the avocado to eat  
She is not listening  
He does not believe in designations  
I am a simple man he says  
See this  
My mouth  
My hands  
An avocado  
When you are hungry  
I feed you

LivingSocial Customer Feedback - Why didn't you purchase Belize Romantic Belize Resort + Spa?  
Let us know!

***Hello!***

*We saw you missed out on the offer for Romantic Belize Resort + Spa at Maruba Resort Jungle Spa. Tell us about your experience.*

*You can access the survey by clicking [here](#), or by cutting and pasting the following link into your browser:*

***<https://www.customersat5.com/e.asp?IID=846C5CFF44950605091D5AE9D2CD3C79>***

*Thanks in advance for helping to make LivingSocial better! We really appreciate your time!*

*The LivingSocial Team*

The plane we took to Chicago was called Midnight Blue. This is a thing. Calling something what you think it is. Naming it, giving it identity. Let's call that what it was: the first time we went together via sky since the last time we went together via sky. To go via sky. Maruba, what does it mean? Nothing is giving me answers. Maroubra appears as an aboriginal word meaning place of thunder. Maroubra is not Maruba. They do not mean the same. I can imagine Maruba is a town. I might assume indigeneity. What is indigenous about us? Indolence? Madness? We like it easy. We like it hard. Nasty. Our bodies have adapted. Our bodies are not the bodies we once had. How we want to be where we've been. How we want to be renamed. Ian says, let's not say what we want to do, say what we will do. Just say it. There are the wings.

*There are only two or three human stories, and they go on repeating themselves as fiercely as if they had never happened before. -Willa Cather*

i am here for the meeting  
in the house by the sea  
i am here to be with the others  
things are happening  
someone shouts  
things been happening  
someone shouts back  
there is glimmer here  
because there is truth  
i think both statements are true  
things are happening  
and  
things been happening  
they are like saying  
there is revolution  
and  
there is tyranny  
they are like saying  
we are ourselves  
and  
we are nothing  
like what we could be  
if given the chance  
here in the house by the sea  
we are spontaneous  
reacting to cold blood  
knowing what needs to be done  
trying to establish what we need  
to get it done  
the dining table a garden  
we set down what we have  
we pick what we need  
to know more of  
so much green  
more people come  
listen to this  
no listen to this  
we want more  
it is possible to transform  
we fan out  
some to the porch  
some fill the bedrooms  
we rotate through  
everything that has been left to us  
what is here is rich  
all the others  
who have gathered in this house  
and labored over the many ways  
we are  
and have been

we are  
and have been  
working and working  
day into night  
for what is ours  
for the whole thing  
workers, workers  
all of us  
in this house

*nada* GORDON

The WormWood Star

The wormwood star  
has fallen  
because I knocked it off.

Numinous trill of lark:  
long slow rue (roue)

There's dream saliva  
in my muscular itinerary

I bought a nemaki  
for a tiny pigeon  
in a fit of pique

on top  
of the wifi azaleas  
and their little monk faces

## Parade of Strange Creatures

She'd been surprised  
at the daikon water  
she called *cat* –  
more like a vortex  
than a whirlpool  
ha ha ha  
your mom's a bivalve  
wih zelkova eyes

"Are you here permanently?" she asked me.

"No one's here permanently," I said.

## Whispersync Gurlisque

My archival archrival's  
medium spiny neurons

the twang of lamentation  
in pug memes

and festive loons  
in the whipoorwhill call  
of strategic initiatives

the theatre of cruelty hairball...

it now longer makes my dance flow  
as it did in my pseudo-gypsy period

breathlessly, I sit down  
and drink a glass of arak

*caroline* GORMLEY

*From "A Darkness So Large"*

*Pliers Rusted Shut*

Two people are in a car. A sermon interjects. The driver is holding a photograph, gaze shifting between the road and the picture. The driver's hand is holding a photograph and still resting on the steering wheel. The passenger pulls at the stitching to the wallet where earlier the photograph occupied the plastic sleeve. Two people are in a car.



*A plastic figurine of a black horse*

The pasture exists. Our conversation swells through the valley. Time does not silence, only quiets. From the porch a ranch and there are the foals. One night the black colt leapt the fence and was hit by a car on US 67. We took a blanket to him. Blood and hair. I threw up in the kitchen sink. Now tell me a memory about horses.

*ally* HARRIS

PLACENTOPHAGY

onanist ill  
oval in aster, few lit curt  
the spore lunge  
a slug, mine anima  
ton foreign, core  
aerated by fire  
into the sloppy mouth

whorls in brag  
coke under a green moon

self x cum; bonefond  
in bassinet earth  
to de-lice, push off a wig  
of ants, why-lashed in time's  
fondant, bored  
om in dour om  
golf, a gag to white  
to common grave

a shatter blink nebulous, whatever  
nothing to miss  
such an old old question

I don't mind being scolded

soft pile, ocular midnight  
ribbon of debris  
fields of cartilage  
be own to each, let be  
not fucking

*donora* HILLARD-HARE

Revolution

The rat he  
has learned his name,  
which is to say  
he has learned my name,  
the protein we come to the bars for.

The woman is  
taught to make holes.  
She wears a skirt like a sore throat  
just to be scolded  
by her enormous boss.

It takes a bit.  
Revolution is not hiding  
in a plastic hut,  
is not going back.  
It is living

in one endless room  
with so many windows  
looking out onto the yard.  
It is you, small animal.  
Let us not get sick.

## Jeff Bridges

In THE VANISHING, Jeff Bridges is the remade villain, even though Jeff Bridges is typically the miracle

in any given situation. It is 1993, and Jeff Bridges tries to bury Kiefer Sutherland alive. Kiefer escapes.

It is 1993, and someone at 20th Century Fox thinks this is a good idea. *Het Gouden Ei*\*. And yet,

you learn. One day, someone will try to kiss you outside a national disaster area. You will lose them. Let them.

\**The Golden Egg*

*lily* HOANG

The End of Something Terrible – III

(from Ronaldo Wilson)

He says my heart is swollen thick as a pig hock, and this is a really terrible condition. He says it is likely I will die and my body will become a variety of soft cheeses, moist and rotten. He says this is what he hopes will happen to me, and when he goes, I am left like crackers, broken crumbs because he broke me, not because he is gone: about that, I rejoice.

## The End of Something Terrible – IV

(from Mike Young)

I adjust the knob to char what is already over.

*anne cecelia* HOLMES

I Blame My Entrance

I mean my presence like a painting  
in a corner, a welcome ghost  
still stumbling over the furniture.  
I mean to say *you are my sanity*  
without meaning we are insane,  
that with some gentle guidance I  
could stand tall in a thicket alone.  
I'm learning that justice isn't about me  
or my clumsy trajectory. If I fill  
the town with loneliness  
it is an invitation, not a threat,  
and I would hope for the clarity  
in that crowd to become a settlement  
of its own. I mean to be more  
like thundersnow now that meteorology  
is malleable. Who can say how many  
of my bones could break if provoked,  
how little I understand the ferocity  
of spring. I would like to think  
we are all one fragile creature under  
one sky, but the evidence bends  
and breaks toward an opposite end.

## Fugue

I was waiting in the woods  
where no one came to gut me,  
no one came at all. It is a  
peculiar feeling to be  
paranoid among trees,  
to inhabit the skin I have,  
dumbstruck like a star  
burning its death path.  
I've always known love  
would stick on me  
the way it does everyone,  
but that is no excuse  
to get fucked in its wake.  
My excuse is waning.  
Is it better to dream  
in gestures or let the leaves  
decay in their sleep. I falter  
through the underbrush  
like a crushed organ.



*shannon* HOZINEC

MISS CONCEPTION

Allow me to slip into something a little more feral —  
my wolf-in-the-apron act is only good for so many blood soups

before animal lust flips the lid. Once I understood starving  
as a survival tactic, I dug holes in which to hide my hunger,

to present my flat washboard exterior as default projection,  
as gleeful martyr, my bleached and bonethrust soul knelt at the altar

of bodies discarded. Drape and rattle, honest in their transparency.  
Beautiful in their inertia. Only angels are permitted to float.

Once I understood starving. Now there is only the deadlock  
of shovel and regrowth, of push and pull. Do you know how many men

had to die to form this body? To make room for all this death?  
An altar is one obvious form of worship. Kneel and desecrate

if you must, but don't forget the salt. I'll meet you at the sound of the bell,  
where they will sash me best in show, sash me least likely to secede

from this country of hunger. I'll meet you there, my heavy, sagging devils  
all lined up in a row. How many times can a body renew before collapse.

The body knows its salt better than any of its many constituents. My town hall  
bursts at the seams with romanticized objections. I'll meet you there.

You hero. You Sisyphean comfort.

I'll meet you there, on the bridge of self-sabotage, at the altar  
with my body made of men, and you will retrace the lines of me

that you mouthed the most, and you will eat. An appetite denied  
is a revelation supplied, and the saints are all chumming. Give them

their daily bread, their contoured martyrdom. I put a coin on the tongue  
of every sacrificed man. They taste my blood gladly. You'll taste it, too.

This cyclical system of birth yields nothing but hunger. What do we  
do with starving dogs? I laugh and laugh. The punchline is bleeding.

You are what you eat. I take off your belt.

## VENUS TEETH

And aren't their monsters beautiful. And are we. And aren't they. Beauty as a substitute for sovereignty. God or X's understudy. Crafted from painted claw and filed-bright jaw, a mask of twisted root and full cheeks marionetted to the point of virginal chub-rub. Folding back on themselves in a state of endless returns. Cherubic exuberance only gets you so far. Your naivete could feed a family of four.

My gut flora could crown millions. Destruction theater. Isn't this what it is to be a woman? Every ounce of me a pesticide for someone else's garden. Every string of me singing in catgut cadenza. This is what I mean: whatever burns is given further purpose through ash and bone. Used again and again and again. Into utensil or eye black. Whatever doesn't die is burned again, harder this time. Really put your back into it.

Eye black fades into indifferent gray. My crown could gut families of four. Too bad the two of us withered into each other with all the precision of thrice-translated creation myths. These silly men and their god-placement assessments. Forget them. You and I, we narrated our grand curtsy, our final ring-rosie-round while sewing frankenstein lines in the upstairs bedroom. I adopted this practice as irony. My little fetal doubt. My glowing psychic vomit, mopped and catalogued for later inspection. Together we stand, divided we fall.

That fistful of orchids you clutched — forget it. Merely a used-up tool for our becoming. Forget about what you said we'd become if we spent too much time marking X's spot, taking X's time, making X's bed. Use X instead to find the pulse of my flyover body, where my rust belt unlocks, where you can close your eyes and forget your name. Isn't our forgetting beautiful. Isn't our beauty monstrous. Aren't we just so us. And so we. And so I. You and I and anyone else who wants to be part of this. I warned you we were beautiful. Didn't I tell him. God, why didn't we listen.

*rachel* HYMAN

## GRAVEYARD HANDS

*With Dakota Parobek*

What kind of bugs?  
(U r an earworm in his heart.)  
Record the bugs  
then sleep in the yard.  
Record a bird,  
invent the common tree.  
U are doing the Lord's work here  
convincing a rad dude he should  
like you back.  
Yung Fricative,  
i will cast my gaze over the backroads of Texas  
like a God. Like a God.  
Are you happy w/ the decisions that you've made?  
Would you make the same ones again and again and over again?  
Because I don't know about you  
but I'm feeling  
like everything I've done has been a mistake.  
I'm sleeping in the yard tonight.  
I'm going to be a tire iron tonight.  
That's right.  
I'm a tire iron, baby.  
I'm the real deal.  
That's right:  
My hands are graveyards in your hands.  
My hands are graveyards in your graveyard hands.

## ANXIETY THRONE

*With Dakota Parobek*

My virginity is aspirational.  
Third grade heart beating  
with the speed & teeth  
of a hybrid beast. Where's yr  
tongue at. You left out a  
few links. Be faithful in the telling  
of this, our downfall.

The heart is meant to be  
at odds, child. The war  
of all against all.  
Evacuate the small mammal  
from my chest. I made this  
gcal event all-day so we could  
talk. I showed you the video for Bound 2  
And yr life was never the same  
Have a seat in the anxiety throne  
It's so comfortable  
Here is my heavy curtain  
Here is my long game  
May it sweep us all away.



*l'esprit de l'escalier,*

monstrous adults

like gods:

they

exist

as

islands

When will you be

nearly as empty.

What are you doing

about

new cosmologies

shock tactics,

even cruelty—

a

lesson in

knifepoint

well, uncomfortable.

What about—

a corona of

scratched-up,

glass-topped

pride.

—indeed noble.

turn

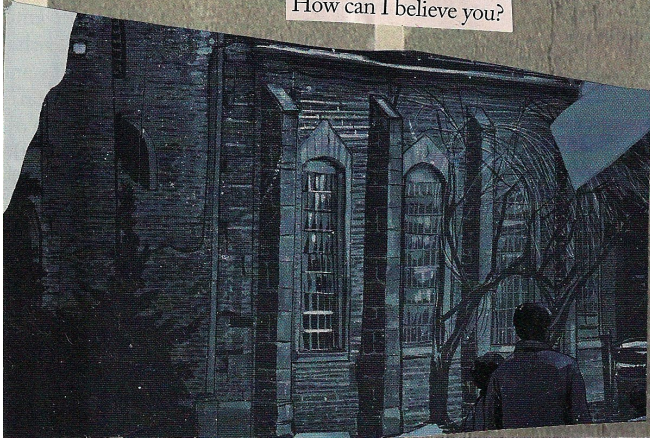
around

jumper

—

Where are you now?

How can I believe you?



*cecily* IDDINGS

The Kitty Cremation Tests

Unastonishing what men want

So hard to know. On the radio

Men make a dead cat fake from

Ground meat and bunny fur.  
Her name is Sophie.

Three, all Sophies, all boneless

For the test. Boneless when you

Burn her she should be left

Nothing. That's ash, for honesty.

That's your basic psych. The brain

Manikin's sense organs engorged

Where we want the sensing most:

Hands, lips, tongue. You and me

Agree what we want. Too much

Makes the mind's map distort.

Boned, returned, she's not

Their pet. She never was.

We never were.

HI.

Hi. Hi.

Isn't it tremendous

Chemistry making us be

Where? Here, drawn tight,

About to. Like

To make you laugh a lot

Of waves, synapses,

Muscles, whole lives of

Words words words

Words must've lined up

Like drums do or metro-

Nomes on shaky ground.

To mend might be learning

To walk the moon bounce.

I mean the bouncy house.

Where you can't be still, you

Know, me. It draws you in.

Its motor meter. Sure,

Some sorry things have come

To pass to bring us here,

But I'm not sorry, not me.

# *denise* JARROTT

## *House: Leviathan*

1.

As a child, you could not believe the field was without circumference.  
You could not believe you could be nowhere.  
You could not believe you were part of what was contained in you.

As a child, you would lie awake, trace stars in the dust.  
You would lie awake and feel yourself expand,  
It is night when you wake. It will still be night.

Lift your eyes up through the skylight, find that the skylight is fluid.  
The stars, too, appear to be fluid, but they are of a different substance.  
For now, it is only the house which shapes the field.

If you saw them, or apprehended them as they are, the mind would calibrate:  
light is dust, color is dust, the nucleus is dust colliding violently with dust.  
If they appear to be moving, it is only the surface through which you peer.

You fear them because by their nature they inhabit the void.  
You fear them because their towns are the towns of the dead.  
You fear them because they remind us we are contained things.

They watch our death, as if expecting us to rise from it.  
Repeat the same myth: that the sky guides us, the  
sky traces our routines, that the light exists for us to follow it.



2.

Uncover the lamp and  
turn over the card: the elusive Star, inverted.  
The unmet balance, the concealed light.  
In your delirium, the star hums.

the universe is made of dust.  
the universe is made of slips of paper.  
the universe is made of quotations derived from an impossible conversation.  
the universe is made of math.  
the universe is made of a substance equal to you, but more of you.  
the universe thinks all night and does not sleep.  
the universe is eternal darkness.  
the universe is the distance between this house and the next.  
the universe is shadow inhabited by plumes of light.

None of these statements are true. None are false.

3.

*pas de deux*

entrée

The whale delivers a message from the underworld, as was its original role. There are only two roles in this theater: man and whale. Water is their mode. Think of it as a tango absent from desire. Both dancers want something different, a struggle to separate. In this tango, it is only the female who leads. No dancer can communicate with the other, but they are constantly speaking.

adagio

We see the pas de deux partly from an aerial perspective. The first time the whale takes over, it seems that the two dancers become one being. When the two surface, we realize the move is to be performed again. The dancers nod, treading.

first variation

What was the intent? Did they practice the choreography? Who has the authority? Is the fulcrum on which the performance rests the imbalance of authority? I refuse to believe that this was absent from the man's mind. I refuse to believe he does not constantly think of death. The first pirouette is where the faulty physics of the dance makes itself known.

second variation

The second pirouette is more breathtaking, meaning the audience holds its breath, as if in solidarity. The conversation becomes disjointed. The music enters an infinite crescendo. We become aware of ourselves as an audience. The man has disappeared into the spiral. He and the whale have entered a field that is liminal, but not without its own grace.

coda

As a child, I remember looking up through the water before rising again. Even in great safety, I felt temporary.

*elaine* KAHN

## WOMEN IN PUBLIC

Once upon a time,  
Saint Bernadette was born  
first child of her mom  
A homely woman  
of absurd virtue  
she had the martyr's squint  
of a Bernadette

A purple saint  
an asthmatic saint  
of course  
she suffered much

What does the world hate more  
than women  
in public

When I am in my robe  
then I am like a mom

And I do well in bed  
and do not wait

When I look in the mirror  
and my face is everywhere

All you cult born infants  
think the earth is your clarinet  
and like to crawl across its body

Do you think that you are greater than a mom

When it is hot  
I lay on the floor

When I think of what  
I have to give

Life has its good points

And the fat, white thigh-bones  
of a tourist

Dear mom,  
beautiful mom,

Smile, as you always have  
and ask me what I need

Remember  
I'm your prisoner

*amy* KING

## NIGHT ON THE TOWN

When the milk is rotten,  
an orchard of cool cream curls  
the wool from our eyes and everything we know  
is human.

Bottle empty fingers, you are starlight  
waiting for buses,  
you are fears, hidden lies  
in plain sight where street corners  
linger for signs. Light smiles through the curve of you.

Fuck the moon, fuck the band, fuck the modern too.  
Send four pillars of salt  
and turn me into Gomorrah.

We cab & swallow whole alleyways, build sandcastles.  
We gnaw at the world's lungs  
that speak words bigger than themselves.

Tomorrow doesn't have to hurt this much  
inside ourselves.



# *ginger* KO

## Inherit

I weep for the voiceless  
little things ridgeless            smooth babies            locked in a lonely room  
   grabbing rung to rung in silence

I am often weak  
cannot stop myself  
and am afterwards appalled  
                 begin disassembling and the negatives peek through like rivers of lava

I am over-eager when omens cease — good and bad  
(to never have to deny that my world is unsafe)  
(to have nothing to do but stay damaged and die)

thank you for kicking at me    looking at me            hating me so you don't hate yourself

a shell made to be split            a core that stumps alone

*jae* LAWSON

## Refrigerator Manifesto

there's this handlebar / for the progress / of history / in my pants.  
so I've taken to lobbing shoes at the works / which is how I got down this /  
foot and mouth disease. please allow / if you've a moment:

a syphon I suck my soft tissues  
through to get  
a better feel  
for the language  
of masters.

When Thomas Pynchon comes out of hiding  
to give me this here pink bicycle  
I having had will yet razor  
the pig fetus skin from its gear switch  
debone it with a rolling pin  
turn over the engine  
with the baby chicks still in it  
they aren't screaming this time  
just rocking out.      and if the splinters won't brush off  
I'll just rub them in  
to clean my teeth with  
as I ride  
spray paint in hand  
out of your fucking skull.

**X=1**

proofing an adam                      apple in pencil  
coming out there by the back of the house

a familiar liquid                      and an overdrawn shape  
time was i rolled pants like those to smoke them

it's just my spine's habit              graphing your calculus  
rub the work down to a sheet of straight hatches

those times i almost ask              "just push me against here and do it"

i could see all the way 'cross the yard from there  
and it wasn't your weight i missed  
it was the wall

*erica* LEWIS

*the silver leaves the drone of clever talk \**

“you look like one of those moon girls”  
how we’re cut  
with a wide-eyed sincerity  
made soft  
suffering from the winter bends  
oh there’s a river that winds on forever  
the emotional framework of being  
stretched between two opposite poles  
when people aren’t how you remember them  
as photographs in the cul de sac  
you’re my castle baby  
deep down somewhere  
i have some beautiful memories here  
god loves you when you’re dancing

and we danced in the river water  
i’m very glad that we were able  
to make time for catching up  
it’s that ancient love that just moves along  
    that Beta Love  
painful or exquisite or both  
listening to the same shit  
over and over again  
love is to die  
love is to not die  
i don’t want to have these  
    conversations again  
    artifact by artifact,  
i remember now  
i am my mother’s age  
doin my best patti smith

it is the year of the horse  
your mouth looked [so] cool in the light  
a choir of echoes  
    rising in our bones, our breath  
we have too much history  
in the same specific place  
try not to look so young  
life is no longer happening the way we want  
say history has ended

you are not only you,  
and i am not only me  
it changes even in  
the remembering

\*"august day" from *daryl hall is my boyfriend*

*baby, everything is alright\**  
*for jennifer sidders*

I was thinking about writing's shifting place  
in the hierarchy of needs for me  
right now  
i love me some home  
the radio playing that forgotten song  
Deep drums. The kind that start storms  
& it is like the best fairytale  
once patterns become stationary and you absorb the distance  
all blood tastes the same  
in dusty rural Americana  
worth is actually kind of the perfect word  
Sent from my iPhone  
until the scars we collect reverse the flow  
these are the words we use  
and i am not sorry  
to say goodbye  
I need to be okay with loss  
to think about all the times in my past  
that I have lost something or given up  
how those experiences have enriched me  
like a sound that lands halfway between  
Oh goddamn yeah

i hate that i'm good at the things i don't care about  
everything we see coming in  
from the space around us  
two hundred billion stars in our galaxy  
the motions of our body  
and life running for the train  
like a little bitch

As the west coast burns, I listen to this song  
which somehow reminds me of you  
we lie under the trees and pray  
for Midwestern thunderstorms  
sit down and look through the book  
of botony sketches and feathers  
we all try to learn  
without sacrificing some purer sense of ourselves  
but i'm no sailor  
in my heart of hearts  
i hope that you are too

it is the year of growing up  
sweet mama time  
the ease of selfhood and genuine soul  
i'm fine thanks for asking  
i'm an iron man

Awakened by the clapping

"uptight (everything's alright)" from *mary wants to be a superwoman*

*jane* LEWTY

## SLIGHT INTERNAL MEMEX 1

A reader who continues to swing her hand across the screen, as she reads, brings forward at her own pace, moving as she moves, the time of overlying keywords... (Stephanie Strickland)

A storm seeking/seek day/seek certain-type of- a day

Over what city paris-type city air rays/ they resemble

Multiple banks of light, they. Like armor, a thin stamping of steel

phase wound phase distort phase displace phase reverse heart

coil

heart lightning heart unit

of current heart of element heart armature.

Hearing wires down outer walls but easily pried.

And guided -- a *please-stay* kind of memory.

Stay bolt stay cord in corded sleep stay

Stay stagger and wound

Stagger wound stand-by and wait until star compare star ID that hurt

hurt in sky

a relay way of control.

Control that tends to grow and grow

as by dirty contact intermittent held together.

Closed core and parallel most parallel sort of  
clutching lonely, passing mesh to mesh.

The close



the coupling the greater the code

and that  
so exchanges an

hour and arc  
clouds could can't not notch up

the drift drift meet meter of  
disrupt live of destruct of of a strange  
route through roads that.

And a tree blossom a final hand touching it

goodbye and the turn and the test of heart of sleep of stays

where memory is a form:

First the settle. Later the haunt.

### SLIGHT INTERNAL MEMEX #3

sensorial uneven  
what happens next defined enter

lattice to contract  
red candle spill  
odd havoc and all else

arrayed and wrong  
and lip torn

other spines wh

ere wh  
on/whom to rest  
is the where where

stammer side linear trails and  
coy pilot-mind makes

this effect of effect

to rack up to map  
inflexible air that is thin-feeling

close-argued close-arguing  
in lines lines ["wld've cld've"]

done to death and worth it ---

floor heat bar heat  
snow cave heat cage  
meat to want

whip every stunted  
heart around hustler  
the

quirk  
eighties'  
faux-me

avarice gutter  
and mock takes tales  
in steady rain

hairpin on white floor  
a well-traveled

oregon girl

in window read  
friday anais  
candle talk

in soft porn  
a grind silence

no fear as if dead  
hand-style

in  
steady rain  
this old night fire star and sleet

a kind of deco way

the  
screw and solder thigh burned to the bone

bone sphere  
skin loose stiff  
                shoring up  
inching small ecstacies

        a blanket, folding it  
in lamplight so carefully ordered  
and mint oil what are we  
going to do to do  
eyes grave through and so close

the weather center  
dried leaves and other spines

only the crazy it would seem  
have weak violent excursions  
over  
a woman

a woman  
fine-lean too-long  
face in a frame  
sense sense  
tall and softly all interior

others, their strip gaze  
glance  
casual, their limbs  
shimmer shimmer each

a pale scapling piece  
of stone in what mirrorsky

never knew them  
nothing like  
swallow that

a tableau idea  
every half hour

end the docile slip and silking  
between pace  
that is funny is false that is hate

rare and swollen  
fault slam always a

kind of couch slaughter  
foot parting thighs

in remote deco way

and ready  
yes

wear it out  
say feel thankyouforlastnight  
semipanic because of it

pull-push-flicker items of repeatable  
in prescribed dark  
sure writ  
the problem of image  
the passage of mouth

of your soft-room le phono girl  
inelegant wrists and pierrot stare

sometimes you forget as the unanswered but  
we are truly dead  
in quarters of sleep

screen architecting the blind

never quite sure  
what was last open

what was last open

what was last open

*francesca* LISETTE

SAFE GO DIE

that I am not pulling out of the air  
a tiny hummingbird

SAFE GO BLUE

phosphorence on lounge space  
ash hallway

of ripped exclamation

flowering of language at viscid sockets

no 'Likes' no body bruised by my invisible alien technology self

press DIE

where are you possible in sacred efflorescence

where I haunt myself out of torn expression

easy comment board fascism

run to the tiger

his big paw is not human for long

START. Excrete

curt imaginary

press 'assume godheads'

unspooled in the time we're following across tracks

across lamentable pathways glowering

in foule assent



*kate* LITTERER

From *Ghosty Boo*

I used to wait  
down by the backdoor: dog  
in one hand knife  
in the other all night  
til my girlfriend got home  
from second shift.  
Senior in high school, I quit  
everything.  
I heard everything. I felt  
everything. I wore her  
sweatpants to school and ate  
what she fed me.

Butch Daddy you better have big arms and lots of money.

I was suicidality. It sounds  
like potentiated  
seesaw: I might leave  
the house and look  
to my neighbors, market-  
bound. I might make  
it through another day,  
then another.  
I am sawing  
inside trees down.  
The trees are howling  
and pissing themselves  
with fear.

Ghosty Boo brushes my  
hair from my face and coos.



I am training myself  
to be a witch  
so healing will be  
electric and accumulative.  
I hold gems like  
precious frogs.

What if I never  
connect? What  
happens to frog bodies  
when they die  
inside fish bodies?  
My cat tortures  
bugs, but I try  
to love them when  
my hands won't stop shaking.  
I need to retire  
this body or awaken it.

I try to focus  
on rose quartz, rose  
infusions. Goddess,  
make my blood  
rosewater. Please, protect  
my deepest beams  
and flood my lungs:  
larva soup  
free me. Fire  
pop my cartilage,  
Earth, you don't have to soak  
in all the ooze  
black from abuse.  
Let it be  
carried away and  
repurposed  
by insects making homes.

*natalie* LYALIN

## I May Never Write

The baby is coming for my brain  
It's okay, I signed it away and went  
to the playground, to regulate  
What does it mean when  
his nose bleeds  
What does it mean when the shot  
is full of preservatives  
Did I do it wrong  
Again  
Did I put a horse before the cart  
Or the other way  
So I did it right?  
I grew up in the city  
Eating bread, alone, in the dark  
And I'm better for it  
How I love the hospital  
but scatter my ashes in a bookstore  
But save some for later  
Don't do it now because I am not ready  
I am monitoring the progress  
of this castle going up around me  
I am counting the bones and measuring  
brain cells, I hope they are beautiful  
They must be  
I grew up in the city surrounded by methane  
and other gasses  
And I turned out great  
I even saw some chickens  
and worms on the ground  
We hopped over them, their grossness  
and kept running  
I sent a long note to all of my friends about my brain  
about the auto reply they would receive  
I mentioned the worms  
and how it was hot inside my sweater  
A man's sweater that has shrunk around a woman  
A woman that is me  
I have no real name  
Just three fake names  
And sliced apples  
I have no trade

No profession  
I have not apprenticed much  
Or moved much furniture  
Or reacted well to the injuries of others  
But I am covered in laundry  
Not in the romantic sense  
But I am clean and honest  
and I can get to sleep most nights  
I think that G-d used to be closer  
Now he is comet-like -  
growing his tail and streaking by  
I hold on to happiness  
He drops me a line  
I bring talismans to the hospital  
and think about statistics  
Math is so weird  
I don't understand it  
I am not a statistic  
Just static  
Who is my foil  
Who will outshine me  
I recede into the darkness  
I would never go into the woods alone  
Not even for a jog  
They never caught the Wissahickon rapist  
I am not crazy enough  
to take a dumb risk like that

*dana* GUTHRIE MARTIN

dissimulate ::

i miss  
lust-slime,

late smut-  
dates,

mud-  
slides;

i miss u;

u, a same-  
same slut;

me, a dim-  
sum tease;

u + me =

mutilated  
seeds,

mussed  
stems,

dusted  
meats;

sidle me,  
a mule,

slide me  
a mile;

i'm dial-  
a-stud;

dial me,  
i misuse

divergent ::

I invent(ed) river,  
div(id)e(d) river;

river di(rg)e,  
river re(nder)ed

I('ve) (gi)ve(n riv)er,  
I(n)tend(ed river);

r(iv)e(r) ve(in,  
rive)r ed(ge)

I n(ever)  
di(ve)rt (regret)

even ti(r)ed river  
I rein(vent)

scherzando ::

a red re(hearse)d;

a re(hashe)d red;

a red (hea)r (r)e(a)d (here;)

a r(ash h)e(n, a )d(en, a hea)r(d h)e(r)d;

a re(n)d(e)red (ear;)

a(n ash, a hand, a node;)

(ha)r(sh dos)e(s, a noose, a hea)d(, an ea)r;

(o) e(ase! o han)d(some chads!)

a red (cha)r(d, a h)e(e)d(ed red;)

a (ha)r(sh nos)e(, a no, a no-)d(oze

nod o)r (daz)ed (c)a(ndo)r(;

a r)ed red

from 'Opera'

— *an erasure of the first chapter of The Communist Manifesto*

I

The history is the history of

a  
word,

open fight, a fight that an  
a common ruin time ended,

In history, we find everywhere

; all the

modern ruins

struggle .

Our epoch

is  
a splitting in two  
, in two .

first elements

From

, the rounding of fresh ground  
, the colonisation of

impulse .

III

in the icy

of

illusion

o

awe.

o

wage

torn

from the

worth

word

and

poet,

o

veil

cathedrals

pyramids,

aqueducts,

cannot exist without

the instruments of

form

. Constant

agitation

is the

epoch

and

. fixed fast

swept away

profane ,

is

. All

is

sober

air, all

is holy is

The

surface of the globe

everywhere.

everywhere,

The

world

has drawn

the

ground

life and death



IX

Finally,

as a whole

decay

,

trace of

has stripped

every

status

.

*lynn* MELNICK

Poem to Prove My Wickedness

I was just lying when you called  
the clangorous phone of this other

outskirt's motor lodge  
because of the places I'll put my tongue

that other's won't.  
I'm no lady anywhere

and, like the sequoia that died  
girdled and standing on display,

I'm older than I look.  
I've been double-dealing for a while now.

There's a reprieve in knowing  
where I belong and a world of ways

to prove myself disgraceful.  
Your fervency. Your remorse.

But all I had hoped for was that you'd  
convince me I'm more than just a body

while I moan *you can't leave*  
*handprints on my throat.*

*amanda* MONTEI

Dear Mom,

When I dream  
of skywriting  
and other men  
and billboards that talk

I think  
of you  
giving  
birth

you know  
you know  
you *know*

hopping  
on and off  
that man's  
belly

but listen  
you never  
listen

sharks  
caffeinated  
breakfast food  
made for children  
and QVC

excess  
production

language  
on everything  
on stones  
on buildings  
on your forehead

mommy  
sees words  
is dead  
people

and love  
isn't labor

without care

our refuge  
a poem

love is just  
turning towards  
language  
rupture

what if  
you lived  
inside me

what if  
your name  
was

*karissa* MORTON

SACRAMENTAL

I

scent of nest & sound of bell  
& you — your thin, your brittle —  
nothing here has a center  
nothing doesn't grow wild  
                    with clash & scatter

II

you                      move me into ambush, into undone  
force me                      into the brushfire of soil  
say *shame is repetitive, shame reinvents the sky*

III

you are not the first body to open me,  
dabbing honey cross on forehead  
to atone for trespass

but still

                    there is too much wholeness to mourn,  
                    too much flight against my ribs

IV

so yes                      go on  
  & touch me  
feel the way my skin still gives sting

*erin j.* MULLIKIN

DEAR JESSICA // The video you sent of you disappearing into a top hat was riveting. When I saw your hair, the last of you that was left, fall away past the hat's rim, I felt like a river on fire. When the magician tapped the hat, & a bell rang, I felt like a burning river being swallowed whole by an obese shadow hungry for light. There is no other way to explain it.

I guess that which we feel is not always reconciled with that which we love.

DEAR JESSICA // I am very sorry, but I have now forgotten what kind of tree grew in the place where we planted your hair. The moon has been crazy since always, & although it seems steady, I'm afraid so do I. This could account for my memory loss.

The moon, I mean. & yes, loss.

DEAR JESSICA // I was sure I saw you floating in slow motion above my house, so I used an arrow to shoot you down. I thought you needed help. But when you landed on my lawn, I saw that you were only an albino horse, a ghost of a horse, really. I was astonished that god had allowed me to pierce the ghost of a horse, so I knelt beside this spirit animal & I called you on the phone, but you didn't answer.

When the ghost of the horse began to float upward again, I let it go. It looked like a strange balloon waving goodbye.

*Goodbye, Anima,* you said, when you finally picked up. Do you remember?



*alex* NIEMI

## Broomswallow

They're only flashes of echo  
tightened to froth at any sign  
of movement

I have brittle hair  
and my child's shirts are dirty  
I gaze in the mirror for hours  
looking for the bottom

The tenor of mopping shifted  
waiting and watched  
the puddles dry

The neighbors  
they dripped through  
cracks in the walls  
they tarred my shoulders  
and forfeited the locks

I tumble spied  
My child warmed  
beside me

there is no growth of you  
only the linoleum  
in the undersink murk  
by the bleach you  
tender the presence  
of the house.

*amber* NORWOOD

I want a phlebotomist

who isn't afraid to tell me my name  
reminds him of getting drunk. One who binds  
the rubber hose around each arm before  
committing. One who tells me he's new, then  
that he's a little crazy. I want one  
who's tender like he knows me, probably  
drives a truck, who was born in a small town.  
Our time together is short. One who will  
dab me lightly, a painter who works in  
alcohol. One who isn't afraid to make a mess.  
I want a phlebotomist with a solid left hook.  
One who takes what he wants without fanfare.  
One who knows why I'm crying, who tells me  
the truth, then forgets me before I leave.

*joanna* NOVAK

A.M.

Yellow is the favorite color of insane people,  
you told me when I was like watch out, another

cherry stone sunk in the heart. Thirteen was our  
legend, molding toward rot. Decomposition is

a process by which water takes me down, blanks my walls  
barren. Me being bankrupt, I don't return your call.

Erosion is a river to the seventies.

Today I own one yellow garment, a skirt I'm too  
timid to wear. I stole the skirt, flung the UPS driver under the truck.

I mean, he's sorry, he could have sworn the package was  
delivered, but I would wear the skirt if I went places

with canapés and lavender  
buds in my drink, gracing the surface like eyelashes or gnats.

My temerity is twofold, my insides might show. As an adult  
you need special courage to own yellow or the right thong.

I have one, not both.

My skirt really is beautiful, wrapped in liquid lemon sunshine, fluid  
on a bias. A lie is a stabby kind of hurt. Somewhere

truth cinches my skirt. Like a knot, an affair to unwrap. I could go  
all day exhuming my closet. One canary me, twelve-years-old in a T-shirt

chub-a-chub-a choo. She didn't fly up from the mine.  
These polynomials reveal our moods. My polychromics are low

and the nurse stood me up. Sit down, you said, when I tried to plug  
my ears. Listen. You were always good at folding paper fortunes,

lacing string around your yellow fingers.

Yellow terror when I phone the ward. For mental health,  
press five. For we can purge our closets but cannot erase our minds.

My favorite color is never green  
a serpent, a vine, o youth when I needed crayons

for names. Pink when another pal made blushing the only way  
to be a girl. Discriminant pink teenager: magenta,

raspberry, bubble-pop. Pink like a bone chewed raw. Pink boiled  
in broth. Pink until please. Pink once we stop. Now

I like mine muddied with gray: of toe shoe, scuffed or stubbed;  
of strawberry shake browning in separation.

Two liquids forced together: we call that erasure. With the tube,  
call that Ensure. We aerate milk and breathe strawberry.

Anesthesia.

He took my cyst. My tumors wait in new closets, my history, her story:  
gross. I was twelve and briefly brave. Everything in adolescence is souvenir.

I saved the gas mask for my sister, who gave it to her  
doll. Even today it smells.

*daniela* OLSZEWSKA

## SNOW GLOBE FETISH

REPORT: I had taught m'self to hermit well. But, for you, I tried consciously toying with a clock-centered mouth. I set aside m'offend boxe and got gifted at avoiding thinking too hard on your obsession with dysfunctional zodiacs. We off-keyed along with the the worst of the vintage radios. Caught a sheet-covered brick in my head. Caught a ghost. I embarrassed m'local police by continuing to go out in public sans immunity to the top ten winter viruses. I embarrassed m'art school friends by garbing m'heart in red hetrochrome. I embarrassed m'sef by mimicking dandyweeds. As a couple, we were only good at parties and things that were paid to look like parties. Remember, I was DNA'd in a country full of problem-keepers. I acted like your mail-ordered side. We kissed in post-Christmas closets. Whilst the moon twisted Ukraine-ly. In between bar and car fights, there were many short walks off the beach. The only good time was when you let me use your goldish lighter to set off the fire alarm inside the snow globe factory. Each employee threw a bucket of champagne-scented water at their immediate supervisor. A trio of tiny elk escaped out the backdoor. Even then, I remember thinking, this is nice, but I'm ready to be driven back to my own bed now.

## WE ARE NOT A MUSE

REPORT: You over-mythologize me. My real hair color is phonetical; my real waist-size is glass pear. You mis-hypothesize that there is at least half a compass between m'self and the other two women you have made *I love you* verbs at during the year before we met. With you, I am never allowed to look like anything other than a parenthesis filled with red typos and stunt troubles. All the health pamphlets advise against this. A bell hooks tattoo does not a feminist make. If you think you're "one of the good ones," you're probably not. My real blood type is Mayday; my real height in centimeters is creep-magnet. No more past tense, please; it's indecorous. Most of my friends call me "Ella." We try covering the floor in slow roses. We try doing it in pharmaceutical order. You use up all the indoor medicines. All I wanted was to fall hard in love with someone who was good at something other than/in addition to telling me what he thinks I want to hear. My real eye shape is feral cat; my real skin shade is radioactive potato peel. Here's the deal: You don't have to tell me everything, but everything you tell me has to be true. I already spent the first half of last spring cannibalizing through memory mirrors. What I mean is: there's very little left that I don't know how to hear.

## MECHANICAL UNICORN BLOOD

REPORT: I opera dress under a unipolar sky. I work the tiny and regal machine. The one that's made for re-conjuring emotions. The one you started building the day after we met and finished just in time for when you started to realize that my life was nothing like a movie. Horse-heart: familiarity breeds content. I push myself off the stairs without anything close to a fallback plan. Please take this the wrong way: I am glad we didn't meet until now. If this were a less wintery section of the calendar, I would be in need of some much redder units of life advice. I would be in need of a bigger, more claw-footed bathtub. And a bed that could rest two and a half people proper. I would not know what to do with all these ex-dinosaur bones you left in m'emergency belly. If this were a smaller fragment of the universe, I would not know what to do with all these free-fuck'd thoughts you left in m'middle brain. What's the guy equivalent of getting vacuumed on the inside? I'm not being sarcastic, I legit want to know. M'interstices oval all the way the out, but the nausea waits 'til I'm back home. The only gifts i want come December are silver coffee spoons. It's an inside joke I have with myself; stop asking me to explain. You already have more of me than you even want, I don't get why you won't let this one thing go.

## RED GHOST FILM

REPORT: The year vampires and I Frankenstein and we zombie-song away in your favorite corners of the Chicago-ish apocalypse. There was a bonfire and I had a red yolk in me and I knew we were about to be finished with all of the you comparing me to different kinds of fruit. You were right, I am too good for you, but not for any of the reasons you think. Stubbornly, I gnawed on a double dose of poppywitch. Went to the place off Belmont, the doctor with an accordion tattoo took both my temperatures. The other doctor went, *It's cool, you did everything right, but why not say nothing for now?* I planned a destination funeral. Then, a brain stem snap. I go back and rose-ring m'center to reassure you I am still plague-proofed and/or can suffer fools ghastly. This mismatch between my shape and your space is making me feel younger in a bad way. In the mornings, I mummy-bandage and mouthwash, well aware that m'real life has stopped looking like the movie in your head you're never going to be brave enough to shoot.



*emily* O'NEILL

I Like The Red Dress

I like how easy you lead  
me to water & call me  
*siren* like the sky's broken  
open & dropped my song  
on you / strobe throat  
flashing *I need you*  
*I need you I see you*  
*I see you* / I like how  
when I'm singing  
your mouth is a fault  
line of my best jokes /  
all my best jokes are the ones  
that turn your smile inside  
out / let me burrow in  
like it's sweatshirt fleece //  
I like how all I have to do  
to wreck the ship is melt letters  
together, make honey string & the sweet splits  
rope & vaporizes quiet & we both break  
on the rocks // slurp it from the shell /  
no, you've never had an oyster / let me show you  
how to swallow a salty tongue / how  
we could speak blister or sting  
but why bother with barbs / why  
bother with closing my mouth  
on some bitter pill // I like empty /  
I like drying in hot light, sun prickle  
on back of neck needling me to blush /  
I like our bones showing through our clothes /  
our bones worn like jewelry / I like falling  
thin enough you can see the words I'll say  
before they're in my mouth / I like falling  
ill & knowing there's medicine to fix  
the fever / I like falling ill so I can savor  
all day in bed / the pillow smells like you  
& the ocean & a song about two ghosts  
bumping into each other / whose house  
will you haunt if not mine / I like to think  
we'll die in the same unending hallway  
so we can shake our chains & grin & moan

twin Marleys / scare somebody shipwrecked /  
scare somebody into dropping anchor  
& staying longer than they should  
to stare at our myth // here are the rocks  
here is the risk here we are now, a warning //  
I like the red dress / I like pouring me in  
& zipping me up & turning around  
to your teeth like game show lights /  
I answered right / I've won I've won  
the grand prize is Coney Island // finally //  
Coney Island where you'll hold my hand & teach me  
what *walk* means to a mermaid / I don't know  
who to be if not the rock you'd wreck yourself against /  
I like the red dress / I like the red dress & wore it  
for you / I like the red dress & I like my own skin  
again / I like the honey & the need

*morgan* PARKER

Black Woman With Chicken

*after Carrie Mae Weems*

High in my  
stomach there  
you are, phantom  
of a flat sea. I never  
should have grown  
up before  
your eyes. I'm the  
sparkle on  
glass lips.  
Type A  
in the kitchen wanting  
more. Blurry  
princess, self-narrating.  
For my  
name I took  
the shells  
offered & spit  
out your  
bones with  
wondrous glut.  
I have more  
eyelids than anyone  
I know. No rest  
for the sweet  
& low-downs  
but me when I'm  
salted &  
night-capped I  
arrive at the steps  
of an eerie  
castle, black  
& white  
a church  
have I been  
here before have I  
been me before &

turned my  
back to myself.  
Long black dress.  
I'm what you want.  
If you don't  
like what you  
see, remember  
I'm only  
a figment, screen  
of hunger & pining.  
A spook  
& you  
feast your eyes

## Take A Walk On The Wild Side

I drink fewer martinis and watch more  
movies you would like it here  
Cardboard skyline deeply in my chest  
I feel the bass you-know-where exactly  
Self-portrait of early June  
Consider me a luminous rooftop  
Soundtrack black bossanova  
Palm tree tears  
Velvet robes & blue  
eyeshadow you're only a shrug  
I'm older now than the hot girls  
Think about that, babe  
Still considering my eyebrows but no heart  
to touch them Fussing with plum  
lipcolor & loose pantyhose I'm probably  
going to impress you  
Old fashioned with thigh-high split I am hoping to be your eternal world  
Bending to extract a pie my mind sticks to you  
like a bad feminist or someone  
deranged hands backside-first to apron  
downer cigarette  
You'll marry me but I'll be goddamned  
Without you my mouth becomes my face  
My thighs lock into absence  
Departure & terminal I'm probably going to impress you  
Los Angeles genesis  
Black & white 20th century hard-on  
If we touch we enter to the world Please let me  
And the colored girls go:

*bake lee* PATE

THE MOTHERS INTERFERE

When we 'gat girl it was pink liquid & spillage  
all tu-tu & curly locks & spit.

Our sweet cheeks

our curtsy-nibble  
rosy twirl  
loosy-goosey girl

our baby bunny rabbit  
tinky-dinky bird-feeder boy-toy

our seat  
for our rump.

Honeysuckle piffle, lillipution stampede,  
little girl—

Where is your mother where are your manners?

## TALKING HAIRDOS W/ EXO

Two eggs in the pan and one  
in my heart where I let her eat it  
out. How a flat girl, yolk breaker  
slides beneath me, I can't tell you

how many diseases I have.  
Is it even a question, Exo-Girl?

Is any girl's hair blonde or brunette  
anymore?

Exo-Girl smacks at my talk  
over the cutlery & bowl of milk.

There's a rock in the sole of my kitten heel  
and I'm holding the spatula, a sticky grin.

Exo-Girl, the one frying white on the fire.  
Exo-Girl, my goldenrod seep of desire.

My body-container simmers, host to a breeder  
and her clanging wars. There's labor in her face  
when I smack an egg on the plate. She smoothes  
for a smile and I stab my fork in and eat.

And I know my stomach is withered  
and my hair a chemical smear  
but my eyes are as wide as the sun  
full and loud as a burning barn.

Table 3: UNREST

	<b>Water/ white-noise machine/ organ music</b>	<b>Metal/secret</b>	<b>Blood</b>	<b>Louise/Denise</b>	<b>Bees/ electricity/ limestone</b>
<b>Sugar cookie to orange orange</b>	Sugar cookie as latex paint, as symbolic of female babyness, meaning no language, soft skin, direct gaze. Pair with: milk. See also <i>sweetness,</i> <i>confections</i>	<a href="http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/dreamanatomy/images/1200-dpi/Z1.jpg">http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/dreamanatomy/images/1200-dpi/Z1.jpg</a>  November 1895: Anna-Bertha Röntgen on the first x-ray, which revealed the bones in her hand, her finger fitted with her ring: <i>I have seen my own death.</i>	[cocktail recipe here]	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2mx1gZqh1E">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2mx1gZqh1E</a>	Shaking the dead bees from the hive, heavy crust of sugar on the bottom, I don't know if I can do this again.
<b>God/loss/ connection</b>	You have to believe in God if you want to sing with other people in public, which really is a shame, I think. We were better off when it wasn't now, eating with our hands	After they shot him six times and he was dead, they handcuffed his hands behind him.  He had no weapon.	He told us that Christ's blood spilled for us. This was before cell phones, when weird white teenage boys were just weird and didn't shoot	Staring at this landscape I am stunned by life and how it is free (meaning <i>it costs nothing to get here</i> ), remarkable (meaning <i>remarkable</i> ), electric (meaning <i>I am stunned</i> ). This beehive ribcage birdcage	



	<p>and smelling like something other than pretend-food body products. I am oatmeal cookie deodorant. You are vanilla cupcake scrub. People from other times or from Ohio now are Campbell's vegetable soup.</p>		<p>people. The Sunday after I accepted Jesus, Pastor Dale filled the Jacuzzi under the pulpit and baptized me. Anyone being baptized was asked to wear white underwear beneath the white polyester graduation robe the church provided. There might be refreshments afterward.</p>		<p>of interconnecte dness.</p>
<b>Mud/red</b>	<p>Brown skirted bathing suit as symbol of body</p>	<p><i>sewed jewels into the hems of the children's coats at night. When the bodies were exhumed in 1931, the cache was found intact inside the rotting fabric.</i></p>	<p>When the revolution gets here they'll put a brick in</p>	<p>Deep in a red velvet seat, I'm listening to attractive young people make clever music. On my left side is the lead singer's English teacher, on my right is his photo teacher. They take turns crying. Denise from</p>	

	issues, 1982–present		that woman's Chanel bag and beat her to death with it.	Newport, on the English teacher's right, introduces herself. Years ago, she was the singer's babysitter.  Denise: <i>We have fifteen good summers left. Maybe twelve.</i>  (Us: Silence.)	
<b>White/nothing</b>	White bikini revealing the navel stretched sad like a camel's eye, the silvery lightning of stretch marks. Pair with: two watery gin and tonics, one hospital straw. See also: <i>connection, three generations</i>	The lake people dress in whites and blues and scotch and do not attend the reunion, because of the disdain. The lake people are having their own party on a boat. We are not the lake people but we can see their lights, because we live at the same lake.	<i>Bearing the bandages, water and sponge, Straight and swift to my wounded I go, Where they lie on the ground after the battle brought in, Where their priceless blood reddens the grass, the ground</i>		County Tipperary, February 2001: Strong winds, 23F/-5C. Tombstone, dated 1886, poking out of the frozen earth like a crooked tooth: <i>Where you are now So once was I. Where I am now So you shall be.</i>  Chorus in the form of falling snow: <i>The world you know will soon be under water.</i>  <i>Prepare.</i>

*alexis* POPE

*from* BODIES

Solution Cave: formed when rock is dissolved  
by slightly acidic water  
Terrains that show evidence  
of Solution Caves – Karst

This Cave provides color This Cave blacks to hole  
entrance of environment What color fades to eye  
water moves inside & back out

Morphology Hydrology Dissolve the Surface  
along fractures Fissures my legs open

(again) (again) (again)

fractured BEDDING PLANES these fractures enlarge  
underground system repeats system of water

more water accelerating the KARST  
Times of healing require sickness require

These growths to wall Ruined surface  
allowing them to enter small surface fissures

Splits Cracks Mends  
(or doesn't)

Pull the moss back  
over my mouth

Cave(s) exist I exit intorightnow  
Inside Onside Caveside

Some light reversed

## CRATERS & crevice

crease of yes

some feelmoan to reach in with

Manhands those eyes gloss over Fuckover my emptied sack

BITCHtunnel / BITCHfunnel / BITCHsmack / BITCHwife

(examine the FOIBE)

## SOLUTION Cave:

KARST me into where

KARST what eats my land

KARST what fissures

KARST conditions & breakdown

KARST my pigment thickens

Cavetrash: emotional garbage

FOIBE: condition

of withdrawl

overhang / underhang

I grow from darkness & humidity  
acidic water  
my waves are all

So many bruises  
    unbloom  
    unbloom  
        i never bloom

Solutional Cave:           Over geological epochs these openings expand  
                            as the walls are dissolved to become

caves or cave systems

underground drainage   my system flows through rock  
ACIDIC COMPOSITION

(what solution is this)

*The portions of a solutional cave  
that are below the water table  
or the local level  
of the groundwater  
will be flooded*

FLOWSTONE: A layer deposit of calcium carbonate on rock  
                  where water has flowed or dripped  
                  as on the walls of a cave

Flowing water   My surface develops   Without a voice of rock  
Black water Blues   Walls drip with this   Acid from mouth  
Words to touch   Fuck this feeling back to rock

(Some rock dissolves)

Positive-sloping walls Rise Wall Here Enter me quickly

if you must

meaning can no longer hold the minerals

## TUFA & TRAVERTINE

its nature is laminated

Deposits may grade

into thin sheets

*draperies* or *curtains* descend from overhanging portions of the wall

Some draperies are translucent

Some have brown and beige layers

often termed *cave bacon*

(Domestic Cave)

snap pop the smell thickens as color drives mossy in mouth green dissolves to black  
Sizzle of water under surface Flow drives up & out & back in Push Push Push  
me out of water & back & in

FLOWSTONES can be damaged by a single touch

oil from human fingers causes flowing water to avoid the area which then dries out

Lack of water

leaves traces

in rock via absence

or presence

of FLOWSTONE

DIVE INTO THIS SINKHOLE

MY FOIBA OF HMMMMMMM

FLOW OF ABSENCE FLOW

RHYTHM LINES WITH LIGHT

FACE TO BATH WATER OF

ACID GROWTH UNDER HOLE

SINKS HERE INTO BLACK

COLONY OF PAIN

BIRTHLIGHT TO PALMS WALL OF SURFACE HOLED WITH  
KARST FENSTER KARST FENSTER KARST FENSTER

(fractures enlarge over time)







*jennifer* PILCH

Deus Ex Machina / *Amy*

*Amy seated at her desk writes, and as she writes, says aloud:*

In device age, a moat without fortress where she moves  
along a domestic friction current, mist softening oaks, starlings cutting in,  
when at last she says—to end—Chorus: to end, for  
a vein of ink breaks the ring's taut skin, so she hand-paddles to turn the  
crude raft around (unwilling to wait to circle round again), a black rivulet  
she manages to enter, hands ink-stained beyond the wrist then her  
darkening dress a burning film Chorus: film until she's blotted entirely  
against the world. Now with a means along the thinner more rigorous  
torrent, a backdrop of silver grass helps the vein pop, their razor tips  
whisper uncertain refrain Chorus: refrain, starlings zoom in, circle to free  
silver, to freeze her in possession of a bird's eye, beasts with an agenda,  
dreaded noise, singing of a tree they saw fall in the forest, competing who  
sings it best, and despite the din she thinks Chorus: thinks, O the  
flapping shivers diminutive bumps (likely appeal to be wind-thumped).  
Until gaunt verticals, a nearing copse, pinch the frame, and her energy  
flows with the confluence, nails dug in wood, meeting the arched gateway  
at one with her heartwood raft, and as a veil Chorus: veil, she gives  
contrast of tree to sky one last tonal purge, a weather vein telling the  
climate where to go, entering the blanketed world, eyes wild away from  
the catalogue of weights and balances she breathes earth. An asylum  
Chorus: asylum— not seeing what she knew to be but where all extremes  
and excesses fall from her tongue, all metaphysic and metabolic reaches  
far from home, where not a human soul would roam—part of a stain  
Chorus: stain, but bleeding over rational gain.

Deus Ex Machina / *Louise*

Seated in Théâtre Lyrique, Louise watches a ship traverse wide sea.

Slice an icy sheet with the hull

loop the draped curvature and pinprick sky

he's an anchorite landmass swayd by umbilical chain

Woman on the shore with blowing hair.

her location maskd by swallows where swells thin  
to tooth of comb

if a noose comes to mirror, she pulls the fabric thro

jagged wave circumference

Chorus: stitch hidden, a star

Captain on a ship attempting to groom himself.

gritcheek in the shaving cup

Chorus: crazy quilt, interlock

a way of seeing darkens

when you're both the same, each just a measure of sea

*meghan* PRIVITELLO

Remnants

The inside of a woman is a pink dome.  
There is nothing Sistine about the way it is holy,  
the way it holds what is cystic and dirty. The body  
makes the shapes we learned as children: circles  
rolling into each other with meaningless thuds.  
At night, the body is ashamed of itself.  
In the morning, ashamed. It refuses to be a body.  
It is nothing it can name. A husband cannot  
understand a sagging belly, can make no feast of it.  
God knows how to make beautiful things,  
but resists, tantrically. After the mushroom,  
the donkey's eye, why make every woman  
into something that can be swallowed dry?  
When a mother deer approaches you with blood  
on its mouth, it is the beginning and the end of art.  
The brighter we are, the more we (are) matter.  
In the atmosphere of the living, we thrive on the dark  
undersides of meaning and men. In the afterlife, God  
tickles rotted bellies back into breath. There, there  
must be another way to swallow whatever kind of  
beauty is left.

## The Rules of Madness

Hey you dressed in a blackout as if darkness could save you -  
I have a story about madness that starts with God and ends

with God. It's about breathing, about who started the conversation  
between the lungs and the brain as if organs were merely instruments

we could play. Hey you, don't go anywhere. I am lonely here  
in the woods where the owls mate for money and not even a breeze is free.

Did you know that everything costs more when you are hungry?  
When you hang a sign on the sky that says *Please Help Me, Please*

not even God in his army uniform can pretend to be anything but the enemy  
because it is so dark that broken arms are mistaken for infantries.

This gun in my underwear is about to shoot you where you start.  
Where do you start the most? Is it your heart that can't stand in line waiting

to be loved? Is it your foot that is trying to measure the distance  
between aching and not aching? Achtung! This is really about God!

About how he fucks girls and doesn't call them the next day. About how  
he thinks their smell is the only offering that will bring him endlessness.

This is about God about how even he can find enemies in corn stalks and short walks  
around the block. It is about beginning as a cell and ending as a cell except in the end

the cell is the empty space we inhabit not the dust that made us. When God says  
he's had it up to here with high tides and bow ties tell him he's right. Tell him

to exhale because you once read an article about breath being the foundation  
of the spirit. Tell him that when you try to sleep at night you are always startled

by the howling that comes from an unnamed beast making love to himself  
inside your head. Watch his pale face turn red.

# *khadijah* QUEEN

\_\_\_\_\_ with localization & taxidermy



Bare-breasted, a woman dons a bear's nose —  
another, a lion's mask, broken teeth

clinging to her loose hair, bits of bark  
piercing one arm, poorly amputated



A wolf with its mouth open &  
crushed between floral cushions

& the fur, gleaming  
from gentle brushing —

FKA Twigs on the playlist



Rip & the furrow deepens & decorum  
accumulates.

Claws out, blend  
with the wood. The body  
in the shape of an eye, or a root.

A portrait with unused legs

*what constitutes your belonging*

\* (*address*  
*distaste for another*  
*I*)

↓  
↓  
↓  
↓  
↓  
↓  
↓

a dear afro  
abstraction = accretion                      facture:  
experience as object  
a rug strand  
duress:    reflect

\* (*address*  
*usual arguments*)

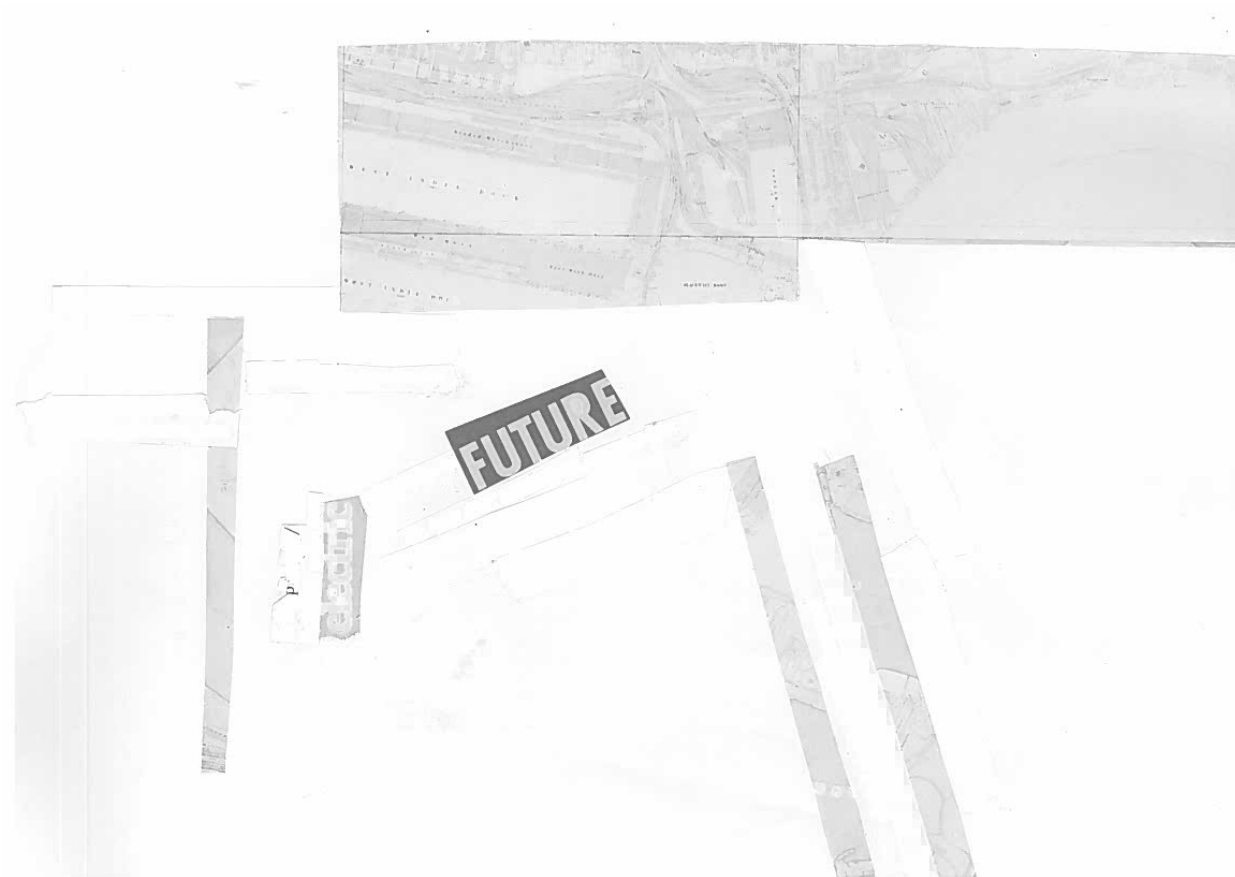
↑  
  
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a

a            detachment.                      source  
  
extract,            to erase  
a            conversation                      on love,  
or: histories —                      , resistance.  
a beaten            narrative.                              & not

*what assembles —*



*nat* RAHA



that the substance of us

% APR

disappeared ::

accum/constellate deletion  
suggested / scored out repeater  
sediment not-i

If they called forms of history /  
forms / phase aging / temporalities  
, narrations we lived only as excess

8/18/15  
I realized I had been to  
the demolition the previous  
night, ~~was~~ between a cheer  
to a howled, 1/2 awake state.

note #  
held above our  
chant of "FREEDOM /  
"FREEDOM"

as the lyric cuts  
unwired / engaged, fabric  
/ arms about,

affecting / press lips moist / into  
iris grey-blue, flesh puzzle to horizontal

slipping protective, our time isn't,  
supposing, hand to ear  
shakes, rests,

WOMEN OF MILLER WOOD  
/ FREEDOM NOW  
scribbled onto habits / resisting  
further punishment by printing  
- outside wards. We - March?  
Marshall St. In the dream,

I had run into a booth  
on Water-lac road nr. St. George's  
Circus & the hand - class /  
white man / merge of a  
fresh and / etc.

memoria \*\* // halt

with the felt of what youths  
cancelled years of & discord  
action from non-i

/ basis inferred  
《;:》 / of substance pale

weighs negative present // iterations, telos  
childhoods, assimilations & futures  
engaged / saturated in workforms, our musics  
until fatigue is stately & all /

accommodations render

cast / pauperise subcognate our // intones memory  
bliss positive / cannot bare  
in our deviance „ as

/phault map  
narrate / directives :

do not speak of origins until we abolish  
fears imposed on us

, manifest nutrients for mouths

identity / fray  
linguistics slip porency from physical / puncture  
// constructed & failed by eyes that scribe  
claim a lived / intonate failure of standard  
cohesion, normatives of belonging in time  
the bases of our existence w/as theft /

social reversions  
before

/ where the poem does not  
// choked rhetoric  
&& cohering familiar the best of times

expressions of pleasure & bourgeois cartels  
individuation  
dislocate // orchestrate survivals  
& screen out of beings our

## *metta* SÁMA

### Winter Solstice Was Late This Year

Lights out  
The night is only  
your friend when the signs hum  
::24-HOUR DRUGSTORE::  
when the streetlamps declare war  
on peaceful sleep the night is  
your only friend

Wake up  
Call in your refill  
Your arm forever belongs  
to the compression of the automated sleeve  
of a blood pressure machine  
The red light does not blink *at* you  
The red light merely blinks to ease the worry  
of many you's: I am on. I am working. This  
is all the red blinking light means

Do you wonder how many you's have sat  
on that faux leather cushioned seat  
arm snug in the sleeve and wished  
on that blinking light

The last time you saw a shooting star you called it  
what it was a meteoroid that would likely  
burn out before it reached any wishes  
cast upon it  
& did you wish  
(yes)  
for what  
(men  
married men specifically  
to stop hitting on me)  
How little of you  
(What)  
To think only of yourself  
(Yes how little  
I can be)

How to stage your future?

You can say the number one cause of high blood  
pressure is stress You can point at the many factors  
that cause stress in your daily life For example

Christmas always seems to be around the corner  
and you never seem to have anything *real* worth celebrating  
except the fact that your entire Black nuclear family  
has managed to live all these years

OR

You can say you got out of Brooklyn intact  
You can say the nights you took the train home  
alone 1 or 2 or 3 AM you did not get raped  
or assaulted by the police although there was  
that one time but that was just verbal and sure  
your blood pressure increased but you're alive  
You can at least say that

How to stage your future?

Perhaps you'd rather become the foghorn  
disturbing the night or become the meteor promised  
to occupy this very galaxy you call home  
(where the heart expands and contracts in glaring  
regularity) or wouldn't you rather just become  
the becoming of becoming that is the pressure of an early morning  
jack hammer turning stone into a scream that is the morning  
becoming its new self

Red alert: Holiday Rotating Santa has hijacked the holiday  
but not before the man burned his neighbor alive not before  
the exploding plane knocked out an entire family not before  
the torso was finally identified not before

Before

The funeral homes will run out of orchids  
but that is the future future when people use hourglasses  
to time the next murder of the next black body perhaps  
we will lay those beside poinsettias

The future is such a stage

The future can be salvaged  
or the future is salvageable

Everything depends on the stage  
you are standing on

Does it not

or

n'est pas

or

¿no?

At some point in this day this will end  
That time is now  
I have grown weary  
of thinking about what I'm not to think about  
you know life stuff  
because I bum people the fuck out  
with my focus on  
you know  
life  
stuff  
Too bad I don't  
eat cookies  
or cakes  
or pies  
I'd have something to busy myself with  
some other trifle  
but I'm going to go back  
to my old-timey sand in a glass contraption  
And count the seconds  
I've lived here without  
being raped and the seconds  
someone else has lived here  
and gotten raped  
by now and the minutes  
it's only minutes believe me  
before another black person is shot  
by the cops and the seconds  
it takes to construct  
a story to build a weapon  
from the playdough that is  
the white imagination

Hush now  
Don't say a word  
Mama is the mockingbird  
& Papa  
is the hand  
holding her  
by the neck

Shhhhh  
Don't scream

Stream  
Stream

*amy* SILBERGELD

I hear the banks  
don't sleep

The moon means  
nothing to them

You're here in droves  
and you keep fronting me

and you stay saying industry  
There goes the neighborhood

They built a multiplex in my chest  
It's playing you in every theater

Our new plus ones taps their clavicles  
Money rattles

Money marches  
Money means until it doesn't

You can't snuff  
the pilot light  
once you're realized

Before the knockout  
a smaller hole punched  
through the sky

I was wanted  
in hair and makeup

You called an offscreen doctor  
about your episodes

Why does a scrape  
of no length temper

We aren't ready to die  
Not this time



Of course your magic was deliverance  
Of course your order was your art

You couldn't know the drill  
of night that holes the moon

You knew my dreams  
were just movies

You had my country  
in your hands

I loved you on  
and on the grid

I could not sleep  
I reached for you

My hands don't work  
I could not sleep

The time was wrong  
Please sleep me home

*kimberly ann* SOUTHWICK

*cedar*

once you are married            it's all about the money  
how much of it you will never have  
I want to sleep with one of my neighbors  
I don't really want to I just want to imagine it  
I don't really want to imagine a specific neighbor  
I just want to imagine holding a mistake that close  
not being able to run from it  
because leaving would mean being even closer    to what you fucked up  
I want to imagine staying in the same place for a very long time   like a tree over decades  
but life seeping from the body                    like money from the bank

*cellular*

we replaced every screen with a mirror  
every spring television finale gasp    silenced  
on a scale from one to quiet    don't scream  
hold your mouth shocked open    let no sound escape  
I see with microscope precision the cancer  
in your gums            cells like small fat insects  
invading one another's sick bloated bodies            antennae  
dotted black and losing itself to the multiplication of self  
the bigger picture is lost to these microcosmic ghost mountains  
it's okay    you can say something now    wait    no one move  
my phone is vibrating and I can't find it

*rachel* SPRINGER

Fever,

My friend the magician told me over and over not to break character, and then he broke character.

I know what you're going to say, brilliance, we shouldn't reformat anything, "reformatting is wrong", even if we're bound to stiff columns, even if we're attacked by lions, both of us, on separate occasions, we should always use the original partition, but I learned that it was wrong to take, so I left to take,

since thieves broke into my mom's Volvo,

in one line, *darling*,

*give me that look*

and in another,

*place where I'm erased*

When I offered her cake, she said My throat is closing, and she dropped her fork. Wild mice, brittle mice, tailbone blistered from the seatback. Something is missing, and it's serious. She hid her durables in underwear, in flowerpots, in the mirror after checkups. Something is missing, and it's a noun, countable, uncountable, a state, a cycle, a speaking, speech, discourse, removal. Use it in a sentence, and it will lay your muscles waste. "Imprisoned for a coup", blood vessels dance less accurately. It is serious, what recovery from surgery and burns can lead to. I didn't have the heart of the person I'd just given my heart to.

*sasha* STEENSEN

from *Hendes*

7.

Where they kill lice with their teeth, like monkeys  
and cannot bear to press them between their fingers.

Where kinship is thought a bond less strong and lasting  
than those formed in true collegiality.

Where they swear by kneeling, touching the ground,  
and looking at the sun, simultaneously.

Where geneticists produced a complete map  
of the chicken genome, *gallus gallus domesticus*.

Where they expose themselves as a cordial greeting  
akin to kissing each cheek or shaking hands.

Here they know not miles, but stones.

10.

You wanna know how many of your fucks  
would be over and enough for me, finally?

Our daughter has just learned of infinity.

She uses the word widely and loosely.

It's not a number, but a concept, I explain.

Indignant, she simply says, *oh yeah? show me!*

One Black Australorp laid 364

eggs in 365 days.

Fear not, you are worth more than the chickens.

Indeed the hairs on your head are all counted,

and multiplied. *That's* the number of times

*That's* what would satisfy your mad wife—

12.

*The boy's dream:* like a flower that blossoms, unknown  
to the flock, caressed by the breeze, the girl seizes.

When I was younger, I built a little structure

I called boatshedboat. If I felt some boy's penis,

I mean, eyes, upon me, I'd say it fast.

boatshedboat boatshedboat. boatshedboat boatshedboat

This kept my mouth open for a long time.

When someone likes what I post I imagine

they like me, or they like what I mean.

Fuck Archibald MacLeish and meaning and being.

I am not interested, I mean, interesting.

26.

The human mind hides from itself, and I find  
its hiding place in a grotto or a cave  
I find its bedroll and its dried meat I find  
its retreat, I find its ancient drawings  
of the animal it just slain and the bird head  
atop the dying human frame I find  
its sex is always erect, even unto death  
I find mine quivers at the sight of it I find  
that between prehistory and classical antiquity  
human sexuality went astray I find  
my desire to lay down in its still warm bed and weep.



*nicole* STEINBERG

the book of fat

(no) drowned

monster melting | my filthy starch

succulent | rules of poetry

in a narrow age | emergent i write

mouth stuffed painfully

(blank) meat | a nugget ain't

crispy white | like

uncleaned plates | obese face

glass actress | married off

me too | spent years | drenched

in ketchup mounds | mini

cocoon | learning the most

from chicken nuggets | wide life

the book of fat | for no one |

silent with the dead | horse |

a poem | 'til it is | tell it (stank) |

passed-down platitudes re:

american blob of blood & skin |

consumed | cooped | inside the big

| blessed sweet | & sour

flailing in fry baths | do us a favor

you'll | blow (back) | roast on the spit

of zaftig rolls | thighs thick as

all the way | in love

me too | me too

to the yummiest bidder |

sin | pigtailed friend rubbing it in

salve | for blistered chub |

pink chicken (&) strip | for us

turn real slow | unrobe | tower

a gathering ache | soaked (thru) |

with an artless oily love | me too |

*paige* TAGGART

Where is that Messy Such a Thrill Tipping Point —

That underwater trauma in dire need —  
That lie path — that wisdom  
streak — that Foucault ornamentation that people put on display —  
It's off the blow charts — do get off my flowchart  
Barbecue elsewhere —  
well-worn laundry code —  
blimps of febreze  
And diagnosticians  
Get rich quick or die young  
We feel enemy — fuel  
We feel old — fat  
We feel foolish — young  
We feel empiricism — waste  
We feel electric — boom  
We feel bottomless — drink  
We feel careful — anxious  
We feel love — passionate  
We feel toxic — vengeful  
We feel valuable — talent  
We feel awkward — psychosomatic  
We feel failed — dishonest  
We feel distressed — sleeplessness  
We feel joyful — achievements  
We feel plain — boredom  
We feel corporal — sex  
We feel

All your memories fabricate squeamish desires that mold tantalists

Oh how our pathways crossed most gabhal on the pinwheel strait

I applied my eyes to the toxic zone and feel both invalid and obsolete  
Covered in dog hair recoiling shamefully  
Pinned down on all sides but a warrior in spirit  
A fine capitulatory thing  
then *your father is a nice man*  
Anti-oath of last night surrender  
Share my shame  
caught in a wheelie bath of impoverished ties  
I lasso after being a wounded ticket to a baseball game  
I hit the homerun that knocked  
the pitch out of the stadium  
So that your mind could be extended to further dwellings  
And in the future I will drink only shakes

You punish me but I just destroy you

Telling screams my porch lights off

A slight tantrum in between decisions and boredom

We try to relax and then claim "we were born with skill" under the big chokehold we admire the  
see you soon

Losing sleep over the sauce  
in your mind you watch people  
Posing in Parks with peacocks  
You see the arrogant faces on display interbred with bright blue splayed feathers

Porch of the light  
August open your mouth  
Garlic in your throat  
deep sluice gives me high times  
I'm intentionally unemployed I spent all my money on salt  
Braided algae into my hair  
I'm an echo ocular  
go later  
locate the seal

Taking the vestigial pregame leak  
So as not to crowd the next surface  
Heckling the rocket ship before takeoff  
Symposium on marijuana bills  
Fair trade?  
Pressing my

Quailed

Enrich smoke

I invoke an interior childlike other archduke of water and Coke

In my sad sleeves I squeeze lemons the emotional gauntlets preserve my speech I remember I  
never wanted to harbor no relations

My game was always plain

\*\*\* I don't want to cheat

The location waivers

Ever so gently corroding time

Entire

Eagles

For bathing your shadows

Fall under the womb

A mother wrestles with

"I shouldn't have had you"

Just as I

Ascender of every poem I wrote

An accident

Coming into being

I feel tired with the thoughts of having to explain myself

Pouring butter over my HP Model

Am exhausted to hear someone saying

"You need to write and live with goals in mind"

I want to force a few joints into their smile

Say "you sexy rabbiteer, it's healthier to live in denial, with vertigo slightly on cue."

*gale marie* THOMPSON

FROM *HELEN OR MY HUNGER*

*—Am I a load-bearing performance, a larger and lighter watchword  
And am I now what whistling allegory you sang that I sang—*

Am I calling out now,  
hungry as all hell  
to the hum of the water heater  
wrapped in a dripping towel  
swelling still around the icon  
carved on a table

Am I motioning away  
from the warmth  
am I going full relapse  
my fingers white and away  
and plaque buzzing, buzzing  
a failure by hunger,  
by request

And how now can I be  
a sequence on this driveway  
wearing these broadcasts  
as the radio hums away in my hands  
and the sky blows to my signal

\*

This isn't a poem. A poem figures things out via language. I have no language. Every word becomes a covering up of something I haven't done. Each ending a calling out, a final, watery note to be repeated without resolution. Then the fade-out.

When I was born I was born good.

\*

That pulling my tights up is a sign. That leaning over to pull up my tights is a sign. That the man over there is stopping and touching himself and that is my fault and my tights' fault. That I will never know what my body is doing and I will hear always someone tell me to put it away, to discipline it, a body, another body, my body.

Under hold of this threat: little girl waiting to be shook open around a nice man who will inevitably do bad things. That everywhere I go, there will be a nice man who will do bad things.

\*

I say *I'm working on a poem thinking about.*

I say *this is a poem vector. This is a vector towards.*

I say *I'm working on a female serial poem. Towards anger, towards trauma.*

I say *I have nothing to give and it tastes sour.*

I say *I wake with a mouth full of chicory, of woodworm.*

I say *there are no other words for what I mean by body.*

I say *I'd recommend not reading it at all, but it's what I've been marinating on if I'm not writing Helen poems and then this just sort of came out.*

I say *And one part is something I've been meaning to say, that it just sort of came to me a few weeks ago, and*

*I say it's not a poem, but maybe after doing this I can figure out what else to write about, it's been bothering me in these kinds of poems.*

I say *This is not a poem.*



*kim* VODICKA

All Tomorrow's H♥edowns

Shysces ritardando,  
so slow in all the beautiful.

Some wingèd beset.

She revival around you  
with an almost machine-like  
passion.

Bruise garden with her hustler admirer,  
filling her mouth and doing the aboriginal.

My partner in teenage,  
so pretty in disguise.

Don't hand your heat  
to the heartbreak night.

She is just bleeding psychic hearts incredibly.

Her smile ever so slightly demented,  
having lived.

I love you all around the bore andmoreagain.

When you shush me, I do  
whatever, I hide  
your panties in the Frigidaire,  
I hide my love  
in the way you bide  
the fork of tine.

Because I love you,  
I pierce my nice,  
my Klimt,  
my eclipse.

Because I love you,  
that's what's  
in the mood for.

Because I love you,  
I will promise  
Mercedes Benzos and Charles Mansions.

Your undivided attention on my divided thighs.

Your divided heart.

She taught me how to love against me.

Sonorous resound from her cherry-pound.

I'm sorry her heart was attacked by her body,  
by her undying will to live.

The stories we may tell to the children we'll never have.

Exploding hearts to all,  
and to all a good  
Mary-trance.

*ellen* WELCKER

from *The Pink Tablet*

1.

once upon a time

in the fangs

there was a child

& her sister

“we don’t want to waste the sunshine,”

& away they went

into danger

their mother waved goodbye

to darkness    goodbye                    to light

very hungry

very juicy were the girls

2.

once upon a time

there was a boudoir

boudoirboudoirboudoir

sang the girls sing-songy

& entered

grandmother knew but said nothing

mother

was almost like

the best mother in the world

3.

lived together ever after  
saying *ninight* to beloveds

ninight Macah  
ninight Deedee

ninight Oscar & baby Louie

ninight woods

ninight witch

ninight grownups

& shit

wild animals are sleeping

their terrible teeth: sleeping

lost & cold are sleeping

tainted food: sleeping

& we are cunning

our red lips

our good little souls

our black

or yellow hair

*lann* WHEELER

much as when mushrooms

much as time wooded  
setting, Orion piece  
tending to the fire, a chair  
experience looting liturgical

normal gallons remind  
dirt queen, wet  
conscience go on groom  
sit—

lawn shed and shake  
time capsule from  
pants

least spilt longer star caps  
the love run happened  
when up backs, under ass that

delight in the o hey morning  
above the evergreen belt

every ill fitting feel I ate  
portesis with two us, we  
rest in cutlery clearing into  
buckets barks locks

## VAPOR TRAIN

Turn sideways, break  
the space bar  
and undo all the wagon trails  
made last night in the  
dirt out of mica chips  
swollen lips  
black top's hot rocks  
and soda stings grape  
needles hours of sun  
spent behind blinds  
edged with light

My controlled release over  
time + space brings us  
to a sod dugout, miles  
from any approach  
yesterday I put out  
flames with my petticoat  
today a surprise party in a strip mall  
there's an extra game  
on the pinball machine  
a pull, release, and  
terrain is covered, prizes  
won in LED only for moments  
but we need real water  
and the wonderful thing  
is terrible--  
time keeps moving,  
good things are left  
in the dirt, and scares  
come up quickly on  
monster rivulets which  
up and re-root without  
notice. I taste rain  
and wipe eyes.

# *kik* WILLIAMS

## Kiss Men in Their 70's & in Their 30's

to feel love to know love  
to touch my toes in love  
feel my teeth in love  
pull my hair in love  
polish my nails in love  
walk down the stairs in love  
get a new hip in love  
slick up my lips in love  
let my boyfriend love me in love  
perfume my breasts in love  
pap my pussy in love  
meditate in my chair in love  
boy friend moves in in love  
smell my pit hairs in love  
scrub my dry skin in love  
walk on my tippy toes in love  
blink my eye lids in love  
pucker my lips in love  
look in his eyes in love  
lust in love  
drink margaritas in love  
play with dogs in love  
pick up chickens in love  
let Lettie move to LA in love  
she LOVES LA  
drive the highway in love  
sing along to the radio in love  
buy a dress in love  
snuggle in a blanket in love  
go in the hot tub in love  
talk on the phone in love  
look on the net for love in love  
wear a crazy hat in love  
snowshoe in love  
walk an icy path to the chickens in love  
wear hearing aids in love  
charge up the bitch in love  
hug often in love  
blab with friends in love  
buy stuff in love  
get in the pool in love  
listen to music in love  
write poems in love  
divorce in love  
eat Indian food in love



have a boyfriend move out in love  
pee outside in love  
plant a garden in love  
hold the grandbabies in love  
love the grandbabies in love  
kiss in public in love  
wash my hair in the tub in love  
swim laps in love  
imagine the water is your hands in love

*gail* WRONSKY

By some strange gladness elated

It was a judgeless  
day, or a dream  
without turbulence or  
prediction—

a hummingbird,  
too: a needle,  
holographic  
nightfall. You,  
joy boy.

Closed my eyes  
in sweet demising.

Not writing.

Not writing.

## Candice Wuehle

DOES the INTERLOCUTOR NEED a GUN CHAMBER, a SATELLITE DISH?

Admit the interlocutor's mansion invoked desire:

a structure by which one  
is served a menu from which one  
selects and is served.

We mainlined on autuming cuts, beige  
sheen, paisley, pine spheres, centaur  
flesh. Our longings  
serpentine  
so quickly  
we hailed them.

We reached  
across one another's china, dipped  
blousons in obscure sauces. Haste  
becomes the base of being.  
As if our language contained the grammar for apology.  
We considered out parents,  
setting us up, or down.

At the interlocutor's mansion the elements were othered:  
oil, marshmallow, hair, pages.

There was no quintessence, time was not everywhere.

At the axis of  
reworks &  
reworld &  
reword me with an/other  
I de-cored cannot even re/request you admit  
in the interlocutor's mansion  
I was your dinner companion,  
I may have only believed it was you.

Imagine I spilt salt  
and refused to embarrass myself  
with learned history, a refusal  
to acknowledge anything  
over, or against my shoulder. As if I was not made  
of salt, as if I was made of need  
for more  
world crystals, tooth & tongue kissing in complexity.  
I'm not sorry I can taste so much iron, or gold.

The interlocutor is dipped in guilt:  
but his mansion is mere sequin, sandstone,  
bushes burning with lavender, sage, amber, yarrow.  
The Spirit Realm vomits to smell his Real Estate.  
He is hot, here.

Once,  
My father sang the chorus of a song from his youth  
over the whole of a song from mine,  
his voice slowed to speed of snow,  
another abundant echo  
I had not noticed

## APOLOGIST

And if there are also flowers in hell

there are also flowers in here; can I qualify  
that? I mean, is there a quality to that  
which can only be gotten at if I admit my limit  
is tempered only by my access to others? I am  
an animal  
who needs to beg.

I need to know  
what my bones are for: my knees, my knuckles,  
the long stretch of skin along my back I never  
encounter. If my hands are open they are not  
closed. Ask the architect about the gate to receive  
an answer on the hinge.

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The deer has been in the impasse since the hunter left. Ask

////////////////////

the artist about the body  
to receive an answer on the gate. An interlude  
is not an excuse, for  
example it is a pleasure to experience  
another's weight allowing a second access to my own burden,  
as when you cover me so completely I am  
allowed experimental cartography;  
for a stretch our skin is ours and  
still I do not encounter myself. I need  
to walk through the gate  
forever  
and  
you tell I was talking in my sleep  
in your dream.  
I am a woman who needs  
to see her own back.  
Ask the poet  
one question.

Is the face the most sacred or the most secular object on the earth?

In the other's hands in the open  
it is neither, but in the alien's hands in the open  
it is both. Again, I cite the diction when at outskirts is the syntax. Against  
myself I mean to demand encounter of the frame  
not the contents, not the face  
but the open hand.

////////////////////

The deer has been in the impasse since the hunter left. Ask

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the listener a question and meet your own

masks other halves in abrupt, unanticipated  
echo. Not the affixed inner, the elected outer  
as the moon in cycle  
except exception is created  
for the disnature of earthshine; overlit arenas  
of rock in the planet's dark limb. I  
didn't intend to encounter you. Hunter,

I asked the wrong questions. Hunter,  
why did you leave me with this dotted hide,  
softness

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## *sarab* XERTA

### General Consensus

It's September and I am tired. All summer I have tried to write a poem the way I used to write a poem, if only I could remember how I used to do it. If I ever knew. I don't remember much about my past selves until they come back to visit me (which hardly ever happens, I am hard to catch up with). I do know that I used to sit in bed with my naked legs splayed at odd angles. I used to feel threads of light enter my skull and move down through my body like futuristic rivers. I used to vibrate. I used to listen. I used to be the river, flooding entire rooms. Once: a whole house. A family. I drowned everything in my effort to live more completely than I felt I was. I guess sometimes staying alive takes a sort of violence.

Now I listen but it is too noisy to hear much of anything.

All summer I have been trying to gather myself back into my arms.

(That's not true but it felt true when I typed it.)

(Maybe it is true.)

(It is true I am always changing the truth.)

(Or maybe what I mean is that the truth is always changing and I am hyperaware of every molecule of space buzzing in around and through me, that is me.)

(It is also true that I am hyperaware of my hyperawareness and my therapist says maybe this is an illness or maybe not but either way there is no medicine for me.)

(I say fuck that something is wrong.)

(I say I think I want some medicine.)

(I say I don't need any medicine nothing is wrong. I say I am just a woman nobody understands. I say I am a woman and no man will ever be able to hold me the way I want to be held (it is true you can't contain me). I say I don't want to be held. I don't need to be held.

What I need is to not be needed. I say (need me anyway). I say (please). I say)

(I say Okay fine.)

(I say (Love.))

(I say (

You see this is me listening.

I have been trying to listen.

I have been trying to be a woman

because I guess that is what I am

even though I don't remember choosing to be a woman

but it is okay because at least I am not a man

except that I have found it is really hard to be a woman

with all these people telling me how to be a woman, that there are good

and bad ways of being a good kind of woman. I have never wanted

to be any kind of anything. I just want

to be myself but by being

myself I am sometimes being  
the wrong sort of woman  
because I have been conditioned  
to sometimes be something  
other than what I think is myself  
(because I am a woman).

Or something like that.

I think that's how it goes.

It is depressing to think about things.

I wonder how many writers are as tired of words as I am (I don't really wonder how many but I am thinking of you). Sometimes I wish I'd never found words at all. (I feel guilty for typing that because it feels like a mini-suicide. I am sorry but it's true, sometimes I don't want to be (I am not sorry). It's also true that I most enjoy the company of people who know what it's like to want to kill themselves. Those who have tried. Existing near them is easy, not having to explain myself. A general consensus.)

In my journal I make lists of essay ideas but when I go back to read the lists they sound so very uninteresting. When I go back through my journal I like most the things I stole from other people:

*We are all trying to extract from madness the life it contains.*

I could write an essay on that. It's true I am obsessed with madness. Obsessed with obsession. My therapist thinks there is nothing really wrong with me (I am just wrong for thinking there is, which is probably not what he meant). My therapist thinks that I might be obsessed with the idea that something is wrong with me because I have learned to think that way about myself. I have been conditioned. I have been taught. As a woman, as a daughter, as a person in the world. Especially as a female-identified person in a male-identified world. Especially as a girl. Especially as a daughter to my father.

(Just now I thought of my father and a brick wall built itself up against the back of my throat. I guess this means I don't want to talk about my father. Except he did tell me he only expected me to do so well at everything *because he knew I could*. I guess he saw the potential in me. I guess he believed a girl could be something better than a girl. I guess that was nice of him, believing in me like that.)

I don't want to talk about my father. (Maybe when he is dead I can write about him (God that is an awful thought.)(I really hate myself right now.))

In my journal I write:

*No man on the street is worth kissing. I can tell in the way he moves.*

In my journal I write:



*I sleep with the windows open as many nights of the year as I can. This is something I've never questioned.*

In my journal I write:

*You are so untouchable.*

In my journal I write:

*You are so sensitive, anything less than incredible will hurt.*

In my journal I write:

*Today something feels right, being here drinking coffee alone.*

In my journal I write:

*All my orgasms are stillborn,  
falling out between my legs with a dull thud*

In my journal I write:

*At the moment I don't  
miss anyone.  
I am so nostalgic  
for the future  
like so many people*

*I am nostalgic  
for the future  
we said we would have*

*carolyn* ZAIKOWSKI

LIKE A GRAIN

The autumn rot ate me, do you see what I mean  
Now she speaks no more  
A silent leaving. A silence, having left

She turns like a sun or scythe  
Speaks to no one now, even if they're dead

No soul is worth its weight in material,  
not silk, not cloth, not wood, not peat  
No soul is worth its weight in stains  
But I did not die

She synthesizes her acids  
Green turned leaf, bone turned carbon  
She says Don't think you can keep anything, fool  
She says I tried to tell you, fool

This is partly accidental this  
Is partly proof of something fine and terrible  
Something small, like a grain

# CONTRIBUTORS

*gina* ABELKOP lives in Athens, GA with her sweetheart and two funny dogs. She is the author of *I Eat Cannibals* (co.im.press, 2014), *Darling Beastlettes* (Apostrophe Books, 2012) and *Trollops in Love* (dancing girl press, 2011), and editor of the DIY feminist press Birds of Lace.

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*ruth* BAUMANN is an MFA student at the University of Memphis, & former Managing Editor of The Pinch. Her chapbook *I'll Love You Forever & Other Temporary Valentines* won the Salt Hill Dead Lake Chapbook Contest & is forthcoming in 2015. Her poems are published in *Colorado Review*, *Sonora Review*, *Sycamore Review* & others listed at [www.ruthbaumann.com](http://www.ruthbaumann.com).

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*tracy* DIMOND co-curates [Ink Press Productions](http://Ink Press Productions). She is the author of *Grind My Bones Into Glitter, Then Swim Through The Shimmer* (NAP 2014) and *Sorry I Wrote So Many Sad Poems Today* (Ink Press 2013). Her poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in *Sink Review*, *Big Lucks*, *glitterMOB*, *apt*, *Shabby Doll House*, *Coconut*, and other places.

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*nada* GORDON was born in Oakland in 1964 and has lived in Bolinas, San Francisco, Tokyo, and Brooklyn. Her seven books of poetry include *Vile Lilt*, *Scented Rushes*, *Folly*, and *V. Imp*. A founding member of the Flarf Collective, she has performed widely in the USA and abroad. Her poems have been translated into Japanese, Icelandic, Hebrew, and Burmese. She teaches English as a Foreign Language at Pratt Institute.

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*Donora* HILLARD-HARE is writing a poetry collection about contemporary torture titled *Extraordinary Question*. She is also the author of *The Aphasia Poems* (S▲L, 2014) and was most recently featured in *Women in Clothes* (Penguin, 2014). Find her at [www.donora-ann.com](http://www.donora-ann.com) and on Twitter @donora\_ann.

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*shannon* HOZINEC bleeds incantata for the canonized sadness of the girls in the back row. She has a bunch of bridges but nowhere to put them, and writes words that sometimes find homes in the gullets of birds.

*rachel* HYMAN is the co-editor of *Banango Street* and founding editor of *Anthology of Chicago*. She is the author of *Dear S*, forthcoming from Big Lucks in 2015. Other writing has recently been published in *Illuminati Girl Gang*, *The Scrambler*, and *VECTOR*. See more at [www.rachelhyman.info](http://www.rachelhyman.info).

*cecily* IDDINGS' first book is *Everyone Here* (Octopus Books, 2014). Her poems have appeared in *Atlas Review*, *jubilat*, *Prelude*, and *Sixth Finch*, among other places. She lives and teaches in Brooklyn.

*denise* JARROTT is an MFA candidate in poetry at Colorado State University. Her work has also appeared in *Petri Press*.

*elaine* KAHN is an artist based in Oakland, Ca. She is a founding member of P.Splash Puppet Collective, managing editor of *Flowers & Cream* and performs music under the name Horsebladder. Her debut full-length poetry collection, *Women in Public*, is forthcoming from City Lights Books this spring.

*amy* KING wrote *I Want to Make You Safe* (Litmus Press) John Ashbery describes King's poems as bringing "abstractions to brilliant, jagged life, emerging into rather than out of the busyness of living." *Safe* was one of Boston Globe's Best Poetry Books of 2011. King teaches Creative Writing at [SUNY Nassau Community College](#) and works with [VIDA: Women in Literary Arts](#). Check her latest blog entries at [Boston Review](#), [Poetry Magazine](#) & the [Rumpus](#) and follow her on [Twitter](#) @amyhappens.

*ginger* KO writes from Wyoming. Her poetry collection *Motherlover* is forthcoming from Bloof Books.

Which do you consider more likely: A) that *jae* LAWSON bit a radio activist and grew two additional rows of nipples, thus accommodating the nursing of several piles of wood pulp and two very short humans, or B) that *jae* LAWSON lives in Iowa? Please explain your answer in 200 words, and submit no later than the moment of your birth.

*erica* LEWIS lives in San Francisco where she is a fine arts publicist and curates the John Oates house reading series. Her work has appeared in various anthologies and journals. Books include *the precipice of jupiter* (Queue Books) and *camera obscura* (BlazeVox Books), both collaborations with artist Mark Stephen Finein, and the solo project *murmur in the inventory* (Shearsman Books, 2013). She is currently working on completing her *box set* trilogy. A double chap is forthcoming from Lame House Press in 2015 and a chap project is forthcoming in 2015 from Ypolita. She was born in Cincinnati, Ohio.

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