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THE BIRDS WE PILED LOOSELY SPRINGS FORWARD

“Through Poland to India to Thailand to Japan—I was looking for something I might admire in the world. An owl in a storm...In every city, I encountered talking men...one said, “We are the coming evil.” “We are errorless!” he said. But I had my own ideas: I saw people, I saw houses, I saw objects, I saw sky.” (Dutton)

With Issue 7, we had our own ideas. We read busy characters, entered remembered settings, prowled around material or immaterial concerts, and compiled them all under the fabricated lights of streetlamps. We were looking for something we might admire and found it, on the stoop of Bakersfield and Vicksburg at dawn, in detention and kitchen cabinets, and strung through the uplifted, informed visual and textual landscape of art piled loosely. On this April Fool’s Day capped with weather (depending on where you are) we wish for your coffee to spill on this sweet-smelling smile-pile of still-soaring birds—warning: this may call for a hurried expedition to replace your technological device—and for your eyes to attend to this lighthearted quote, taken from a thumbprint-sized AIM profile picture, circa 2006: love is like candy; you want more and more, unless you get a sucker...

We promise you won’t get a sucker. Keep owling, readers. Or howling, to capture the directional mysteries of bird weather. No fooling.

Nicole Letson, Johnathan McClintick & Karolina Zapal
THE OLD MAN AT DAWN

by T. Francis Curran

The old man wakes with old man aches and curses as I turn down the sheets. Beleaguered limbs make labored movements until at last he finds the floor and hobbles off on unsteady feet. He walks on neuropathy like a young man walks on stones.

His creaky knees descend the creaky stairs, telling the cat that breakfast is coming.

“It’s too cold,” he announces while the coffee brews. “It looks like rain today,” he complains, as I look for the flashlight in the drawer where he thinks he left it yesterday. Soon he cannot find his shoes.

“I want to sleep,” he says after his laces are tied, but I pull him up, and I push him outside into the dark, the cold, and the rain, and lock the door behind him.

“Run,” I tell him cruelly.

He wants to protest. He wants to curse and to fight. He wants to go back inside and surprise his wife with coffee in the warm bed he has just left, but he wants to run more. He hobbles off at last, the flashlight, yellow and slow like the moon bobbing on a stream.

He is stiff and pained in some places and in other spots numb. His mind wanders, and he thinks of taxes and funerals, of car loans and crabgrass, retirement and scotch. He doesn’t like scotch, but he thinks at his age he should try it again.

In the distance a traffic light turns, and he thinks that if he hurries he can cross safely before it changes back to green, but he is too slow. That younger man comes by for a moment, the one who doesn’t stay long. There used to be a boy sometimes. He’s been gone for years. So the younger man finishes the run alone, putting the flashlight and shoes where the old man can find them in morning.

There’s more grit than glitz at Joe’s Barber Shop in Tomball, Texas. But there’s plenty of history too. Barbershop owner Vic Perkins stands next to the 1946 model barber chair his father used to cut customers’ hair. Vic’s father was WWII vet, and Perkins proudly displays his father’s service medals and flag on the back wall. Perkins, who only works a couple of days a week in the shop now, actually followed in his father’s footsteps in becoming a barber. “He used his (GI Bill benefits) to get a license after the war,” Perkins says.

AT JOE’S

Tom Darin Liskey
In some ways I was older
as old as they were.
On my mother’s side of the family
the men had all the
power. The vision of
a girl weighing them
down like the weight
of water. It is acute.
They all think that you
need to make babies
in order to survive.
Outside it’s nondescript.
Inside it feels like
a prison. I am
listening to the lifespan
of a river. Homesick
for smoke and honey.
For the heartland
where birds consider
themselves under trees
as if they were haiku.
There is violence
in the poetry of Ted Hughes
but it is not a crime.

What does the word
‘soil’ mean then.
What do you do when there
is a revolution wrapped
around your throat.
Somehow they live.
Somehow they survive.
Without water. Without
capitalism between
the sheets. What does education mean, progress.
After silence. After cries
that haunt. That haunt.
This is reality.
This spoon fed abnormality.
I have to work my
self to the bone like
any inglorious idol.
Spark! Spark! Spark!
Sharp! Sharp! Sharp!
Those are the words
of the philosopher (in Africa).
All poets are philosophers.
It is our inheritance.
May Journal: Monday, May 27, 2013

Sun broadcasts across splotchy thick fog with snow-blinding ferocity. It conspires eagerly in fog’s undercover plots. Familiar road bends lure passing cars to abrupt honking halts. Penned-up dogs volley their moon-howls in reply. House roofs brush locks of thinning silver hair. Loose strands float off. They snare low branches. Lying in wait to trip tires and throw steering wheels off course, they sink into the mud of the roadside ditch. With roof lights snapping yellow out of nowhere, the first school bus of the day emerges from the light’s white wall.

May Journal: Tuesday, May 28, 2013

The back gate winks flirtations to the woods. Too busy to flirt back, they shake their windblown heads. The gate swings wide and says, I’ll come out anyway. The path trips up through fallen rotting limbs. The stand of pines chatters its constant chatter: whoosh—whoosh. The path loses its last trace where the creek greets trodden marsh grass: glug—glug. As sunset opens its bag of stains and pigments, the stumpy dead trees in the marsh swoop up flurries of rasps and caws. Above their nest, Hawks rise and sink with news of a full day. The path stays busy in its present tense.
August Journal: Tuesday, August 20, 2013

A day—a night—four inches—dawn creeps from steamy covers to find the sun checking out the storm’s mementoes. The stream can’t decide how to squeeze back down between its banks. On lower branches of thorn bushes, plastic bags, beer cans, hamburger wrappers and half-limp “new baby” pink balloons, show off. Choked with mocha, water ripples across the lower lawn. Where it slowly draws back, washed out tulip bulbs with shredded leaves spatter the mud grass. As if the lid fell from the dumpster, a sour nameless mix spills up into the bright fresh air.

FRAGMENT OF A FLOCK
Karena Ness
The Manitoban wolf slinks down the foothills into neighborhoods. Her predawn silence snaps frigidity’s sharp fangs into the starlit dark. She howls record lows of Brrrr and Grrrr. She shreds leaves from trees. In the yard lights light their blizzards drift against the front porch steps. She burrows teeth into outside door handles and porch rails. Her paw-slaps knife at ungloved wrists and bare skin faces. Drooling down the cheeks and icing up the beard, their sharpness stabs blistering helpless eyes. Her shaggy throat muffles deep gutturals of Grrr, Grrr and Brrr.
from *Ic*
*by Serena Chopra*

**PALPEBRA**

1

When thinking
The lids at last

In emptiness the colors the carpet patterns felt

Thinking
The observations

Keep

How to, from the fallen
But those too calm
Calm carry on

Ash

Hands against stitches in the felt
We are only
Too happy

To

Lies ahead
Where steam cools
Light flavors light

Fog

And in sleep
this sleeping watch

---

**GULA**

2

In noon the shad
ow is trapped be
neath your body
your heart is si

tence my head so
 loud beating from
what it can draw
out a silence

who live the life
that tortures us
or easily
allows it its

leave I cannot
tell you honest
ly there’s no truth
the bitten green

healing in dead
ened ways scar dust
burn musk truce tuck
urn break in
lie in

mute
SIC

3

Meets thirst
Halfway anymore

Than in crystal, sun
To have
too

Inside itself inside folding
loose track of patterns

Manic seams
the order

The body is a need
To write here, water

Note patterns
People and what gifts

Them poverty

Place needs want
see

There is nothing
To say
BAKERSFIELD
by Shawnie Hamer

empty fields that hold everything, dear. wells of black gold, sticky ambition, children’s next meals
(re)production in a double uterus, where’s your horned second?
buried under tumble weeds. I couldn’t let her see this terrain. I don’t trust the handyman, the DNA
go ahead, birth only panic, she’ll still rot in the desert
it’s too hot too cracked too arid. where the life drains out of women’s medicine cabinets, of men’s failed hands
monuments crumble all the time, snort a line.

I see family portraits in the trenches of knuckles, where the heads grow on beasts. legend has it there was once three
god named dry land on the third, must be why you are such a drag
I don’t allow myself to see the monster under the bed under my head, what I carry in my mitts, if you don’t look--
hush little baby, don’t say a thing, might hear the truth in your rambling
except when it drags you by your ankles in your sleep. throws you into a bar, a book, cigarette smoke
nightmares are reality in focus, you can see for miles on a clear day
quit dreaming, child, you have the slow-killing scars in your thumbprints. final message of a whiskey bottle floating:
“lawd help me to see!
lock me up, throw away the key!”

pray stay on your knees, in the dirt. words are just cousins and casualties. home is where they can rest in peace, country songs
I have loved some ladies and I have loved jim beam, and both tried to kill me in 1973.
they tattooed it on your chest, made you watch in a mirror as they stabbed, poked it into our legacy. an heirloom titled

Manic Hydra Beast Toxic Ink (thing)
cut it out, girl, you’re no hercules you’re a silly scribe carving commandments with a butter knife. decapitation is no fun without a sword
grandpa turned excalibur on his throat, too bad boys are the only ones that can pull out
his neck grew back twice the size now he is too old to hold it up. he steals the black gold from the field to forget
Dope Derricks; Smack Fracking; it has a nice sting to it, don’t you think? (get on the right track)
everyone is digging in the dust, covering lungs so that when those dead relatives come up in conversation they just cough up ghosts jesus, you are talking in circles, everyone looks the same covered in silica
how’s that possible when all is written in squares? houses, money, mirrors, jail cells, asylums, the bible
hell is mapped in seven rings, the fifth is where the next reunion will be
we were shipped here for our sins, america the free penitentiary. I can’t trust the compass if it is always pointing back at me
attraction to a phantom limb (pins needles pins needles pins)
we bought it, the sweater in the desert. stolen time on knockoff ankle braces, hawk them to the rich so we can get our kicks tonight.
the second neck is flexing, prefers to wear swiss that’s impossible i’ve kept it chained up in poetry, fed it only verse for decades now. no way a beast that size could sustain been fueling up on your bullshit too, premium grade
I feel the rumble in my spinal cord, turn down the heat or the whole thing will boil over. oil spill sprouting heads as you chop them down the wheels on the bus are flat, jane hit the road, and jack hit back
I am aware (thing) I am good (thing) I will fight it with words (thing)
you’re a fucking criminal, turn yourself in (sides out)
FOUR

by Dion Farquhar

Tucking Alex in
after two books
still bright-eyed, not sleepy
looks at my chest

Can I see your nickels?
You mean ‘nipples’?
Yes.
I pull my tee shirt up,
lift my bra over one breast.

He looks, pauses,
I was a tiny baby inside there.
BABY ALICE
by Peter Clarke

Baby Alice came out with an infected head. She was five pounds, atheist, vegan, and spoke a combination of English and Russian, as requested by forms 91-6A, 93-B1, and 78-L9, respectively. The infected head, which was not requested, had caused a massive purple bulge to form between the left eye and ear.

“No milk!” Alice screamed as her first words when a white-mustached doctor came with a needle. “I’m vegan!”

“Shhh…” said the doctor. “Hold still, Alice. It’s only to kill the pain.”

Baby Alice cursed at the doctor in Russian. Her voice was husky and authoritative, as per form 88-P2.

“I know my rights,” said Alice, crying now.

The doctor laughed. This kid was making good use of her vocab module, alright.

“We’re just draining all the puss out,” the nurse explained, leaning in with a large syringe.

There was about a pint of puss. It was bright yellow and incredibly warm.

“What should I do with this, doctor?” asked the nurse. The doctor gave some orders under his breath. All very solemn, Baby Alice noticed.

“No!” she said. “Give it back!”

“Shhh…” the doctor cooed, poking the baby with a strong sedative.

“You won’t get away with this…” But before she could even get out a single curse in Russian, she was out cold.

When Baby Alice awoke, she was alone in her hospital room. She could hear her mother out in the hall talking with the nurse. Still in her very first moments of life, Alice sized up her mom as a sweet but gullible woman. A product of a time before form 91-6A, etc.

The nurse was saying, “She’s doing very well. She’s resting now…”

There were footsteps leading away. Then silence.

“A look of extreme fury crossed Alice’s face. When the doctors had their backs turned, she whizzed past. Putting her hyper-sensitive nose into action, she sniffed out the trail of puss in the air, following it to a locked door. With no time to lose, she kicked it right down.

“You think Alice is okay?” her mom asked her dad a short distance down the hall.

“We paid so much extra for those super abilities and genetic corrections, she damn well better pull through!”

“Imagine an infection of her head. Never heard of that, have you?”

“I don’t like the sound of it…” her dad grumbled.

As she entered the locked room, Baby Alice closed the busted door and gasped. Bags of baby head puss filled the room. There must have been hundreds of them.

Just then… “What happened to the door?” It was the doctor’s voice. His head poked into the room.

Alice panicked. She was standing in the open, holding a dozen bags of baby puss.

“What was this stuff anyway? That was the great mystery. They were harvesting it for something.

“Hey!” yelled the doctor, storming towards Alice.

Not quite old enough to restrain her baby impulses (despite her better judgment as per form 23-BL), Alice ripped open one of the bags and guzzled the puss.

“What are you doing, you crazy baby?!”

The doctor began backing away, terrified. Baby Alice burped, muttered something in Russian, and got a little wobbly. Her eyes began to water. She turned red and broke into a burning sweat.

It was only then that she realized that this, her first meal, didn’t exactly satisfy her vegan ideals. So that was one mistake. Also she suddenly found herself seriously questioning her convictions as a born and bred atheist. It was like her whole life up to this point had been a sham. For a whole seven hours, she had been living in a fantasy world of lies and evil deceptions. But now her eyes were open, and she saw the truth—not only that there was a god, but that she herself was god.

“Out of my way!” she bellowed, her voice huskier and more authoritative than ever. She raced around the hospital, curing everyone and punching anybody who got in her way.

When the god juice/baby puss began to wear off, doubts immediately crept in. Her pre-programmed atheism was triggered like a switch. Also she was hungry and dying for a real vegan meal, served on the bosom of her half English, half Russian
Exhausted, Baby Alice stumbled back into her hospital room and started crying in her bed. She didn’t even notice the new purple bulge that was beginning to grow on the side of her head...

At last she fell asleep, and the doctors, one by one, peeked into her room. When it was determined that it was safe to enter, the white-mustached doctor escorted her parents to her bedside. In her troubled dreams, Baby Alice could hear her father’s voice demanding an answer.

“We’re harvesting it…” the doctor whispered, “for aliens... for the government... for god...”

Fifteen years ago, Grandma and I are being hunted.

An empty bread bag and the swans long gone, we watch our dusk-shadows ooze from the wood dock down onto green water. She asks Did you have fun at your Dad’s? and I am about to say No when the sun snags the water like palmetto branches against optimistic wool.

Three alligator heads bob up, their noses skimming the water for more threads of my scraped knee, Grandma’s fading muscle. I am a child, so I give each gator a split-second name:

- Rebekah, who says I can call her mom or stepmom,
- Marla, my real mom, who lets me sleep in the big bed,
- and Nicole, who mom says was nineteen and just foolish, but your father knew.

Grandma’s I guess that’s our que to head home pulls my feet up, and the three heads dip underwater, the option to swim invisible, closer.

Fifteen seconds ago, I am alone in the shower.

Masturbation drips off porcelain tile, past my wife’s razor, seeps out of cracked pipes into our apartment complex’s retention pond.

The same three heads – scars, darker eyes – surface their aged leather like sun spots against the orange expanse of dawn reflected
onto the water.

Their trio of sniffs – cereal dislodged with a sigh, my crotch lathered in soap twice, and a different soap to clean the tub – perk my dog’s ears up, her jowls into a snarl.

She’s barking, and I am standing naked at the window, and I am almost an adult, so each gator gets a better name:

Ring, my white crust to scrape off, my father’s finger barely naked a year,

Senna, my wife, taking her chances on my only role models,

and Lungs, dank air molding into the thought that betrayal is another set of birthday presents, not my left hand.

**IN REGARDS TO VICKSBURG**

_by Tom Darin Liskey_

Our car
broke down
In Vicksburg

Broke down
like our marriage

On our last ten dollars

You hocked:
our wedding rings
the laptop
jewelry
whatever else
we didn’t need

We sold the car for scrap

With the money
We rented a room
At Dixie’s Last Stand

A motor court
with stuttering neon
& tattered banners of defiance

The room reeked
Of roach spray
curry
& the last dregs of love

Across the road
There was a cemetery
Where some boys
From Ohio
Died fighting in 1863

now
they
lay
mouldering
Awaiting
Resurrection
under
shadow-cloaked
oaks
& Spanish moss

We lived off
fried bologna
sandwiches
Discount cigarettes
& Wild Irish Rose

The cheapest wine
We could afford
At the corner market

Paying for our victuals
In crumpled dollar bills
sticky pennies
& nickels, dimes & quarters

It was a miracle
How we made the money stretch
for the room and booze

But sometimes
I'd have to walk down
to the Home Depot

Early in the morning
& wait
With the Hondurans
In the parking lot
Hoping for a little work

While you panhandled downtown

telling the lawyers
& office workers
or whoever walked by

That our baby boy
Was sick
With leukemia

That every penny
They could spare
Would go towards paying:

medical bills
food
medicine
shelter
...toys for the child

You even showed them
The picture of you
Sitting
with
a child
on a
hospital
bed

A young boy
Without any hair
ravaged by chemo
tubes and wires
running from his body

In the photograph
Your arms
Are wrapped
Around his shoulders

You are smiling
& the boy is smiling too

The son we lost to cancer
Before everything else

Amok
Michael St.Germain
Deserted
Michael St.Germain

The Stand
Michael St.Germain
LEARN TO FLY
by Cindy Rinne

He regards
the date bars display

She
reaches
captures
a glimpse of the womb
of heaven – people write, paint,
and sing

He flies corporate
people, teaches flying,
and fixes planes

You are a bird, she says
Selects

Weaving is Fun at the outdoor
book exchange
He orders
vanilla latte to go

and peeks
at a unicorn covered in feathers

ART CLASS DETENTION
by Doug Mathewson

“What do you do in art class detention? Do you have to wash out paint brushes,
or sharpen pencils, or what?”

“No, we do those things anyway. It’s like a study hall, only really horrible.”

“So you just sit, or do you have to write the names of the Dutch masters five hundred times, or what?”

“Worse, way worse. They make us draw the worst things. Cliché art, completely mind-numbing bad. We have to do motel art for one thing. You know, sad clowns and big-eyed kids? They threatened one guy, said he’d have to do a Velvet Elvis! He got pretty upset, so they let him off with some washed out impressionist seascapes. He was actually shaking!”

“Well what about you? What did you have to do, or do you not want to talk about it?”

“It was funny. They were real serious and told me I had to draw Snoopy. I knew what they wanted, what they expected. Snoopy on top of his dog house, or Snoopy dancing, you know, something like that. So what I did instead was the Snoopy balloon, the one that’s used in the Macy’s Parade every Thanksgiving. All those balloons are stored in New Jersey, you know, and only brought into Manhattan for the parade. So what I did was a painting of all the balloon handler clowns trying to get Snoopy into the Holland Tunnel. All these clowns straining away, pushing and shoving on Snoopy’s butt, trying to get him into the tunnel. Every clown had my teacher’s face.”

“Uh-ho…. how did that go over?”

“Good I guess. They gave me a pass for next week to use the 3-D printer in the library. I wonder how big I can make it?”
AFFECTIVE PERSPECTIVES TAKEN PLACEMENT

by Tristan Lipe

broader lands of many many many multiples

tabled commons but different in number

that’s okay

the differentiated metastasized leaves of bladed grains

inbetween the inbetween spaces

which is mostly full

of empty

empathied to a stationary position

whose pushed forward to new positions of positions

of posts of particles mand womand (wo)(mb((a))n))ned

either or both and neither nor

for everyone

is

found in this translucent mold of me is the wiggle

of sub wiggles made up of various sub-sub wiggles

of the etc. cells

and both and snores at once with

neither/nor

yes is not

knotted together into the joints that make thing

sound

thoughts combed from fractal follicles of the hair

on our crotchs

that’s always therer

this does this and is not that but could be with out of the the but with held

space that thresh holds

flesh flushed with joy

that it is seen as a flesh

savored as flesh

tenderized and genderized by choices not

projection screens

and rejection things

that’s just the way

we’ve been but

have to be could

have been the faulty

fallacy from the hair

on our crotchs which is there

and now some one else has

been here

1:1:1:1:1:1:1+1.1'

there is no 01101111 01110000 01110000 01101111 01110111 01110111 01101001

01110100 01100101

in the threshold

the only difference is difference and difference

is everything and everything is everything

which is lovely which is okay

which is okay

which

is okay

i Read as “one to one to one to one...”

ii Opposite
FINALLY THEY CAME INTO VIEW
W. Jack Savage

FINALLY THEY CAME INTO VIEW
W. Jack Savage

HIS DARKEST MATERIALS NEED HER NEEDS
by Anne Gorrick

Side lengths her sparowed Japans
Tetrahedron wolfram mathworld
Tell all the truth but slant it with analysis
Chicken heads, be quiet
Cheetah Girls, say all the cheeses in alphabetical order
This is a cherry blossom checklist manifesto
The inspirational quotes in infomercials are like dancers adjusting their slippers
North American birds telegram their touring caravans
In a milliyeet, what is the meaning of a tossed salad?
The islets of Langerhans or stiletto spy school
Apiaries, morphlings, moisture meter, instant whitening
Morning slang in translation’s ginger, an omission paradise
Swim school, tiger beetles, leechking
Lattice field lyrics, liturgical as a little Vassar
She’s got a touch of frost called panic, and is a total waste of makeup
Acoustic taboo summary, a fault tolerant book
A madrigal suspended like a secular god in a sunbeam
Polyphoic prayer, a slim optical slot
His marriage was new every morning, the mercies in his money cologne
This is a metadescription of Maryland
Her mouth had myriad subtitles, Sweeneybloomed
Chinese zodiac, chisel-couture, a violet and lemon Navy wedding
Ruster remover, crab grass preventer
They are dressed ideally for a revolution
Agnostic and theistic Satanism, theists gone wild
Does god exist in the encyclopedia?
Their cowgirl lives for grammar, their list-buried lives
Seahorses say goodbye in different languages
An ideological oddity annoyed by forever
Those seen dancing were followed by footnotes, abbreviated kingdoms
Fangraph hands lean wisely on great forces like parasites and supernovas
Anemones hosting and licking superfruit
What is the pronunciation of “sleeping sickness?”
Steal shade, slick deals for SleepNoMore, Sleet helmet
Slope intercepts form in pleated sheets
Chew bubble gum as the winners go by in their cheap perfumes
Our chemical image of the invisible, the chemise she wore at her execution
Henna seduction
Are you afraid of a dark where lap giraffes are real?
Are mermaids funny or evil or brittle?
A crowd in a microwave, where snow can lead to apples and ivy
An arrangement to defraud definition in a sorrow walkthrough
Yeah, yeah, yeah, fun, fun, fun
Shell variables tease you with applescript
Collect souls in this sentence and their selective mutism
Perfection makes her look thinner
What do they wear in Madagascar? What do Situationists wear?
Chinese lanterns, electronic cigarettes, dead symphonies
Turns out the world has a crush revealed on the integral solace of sorrow
The physics of secrets, is the world going to end on Saturday?
Are rocks gay? Mistletoe cancer, piano wire
A chemistry student explains hell as an artist + a lot of fizz
A chemist was given four unidentified wishes to strengthen a mixture:
emblems + everyone’s got a random engine
everything started to fall + her etcetera creams

*whispers* “BANGERZ”  
by Alex Vigue

I’m a song backwards open wide.
Someone already wrote the world.
I once saw Philip Levine kill.
He killed it like Miley Cyrus!
Red lipstick too.
Why does every gay man never text back?
Sext: they are now in charge of your blood.
you flirt using their song lyrics
“I’ll come in you like a wrecking ball.”
BUT THAT’S THE LIE!
Hire self-esteem
we’ve traded whispers for bass and puns
trade in your bed
trade for your soul
trader
I’d trade every pop song for man who stays
I’d trade top 40 for a chance to have a child
I’d trade iTunes to be able to walk on the street holding a man’s hand and not have
a panic attack
just sit quietly in good music vibrations
sounds like fire.
“I want an early grave.” the songs say
Poet/ Musician Collab: I left my best friend.
Fist pumping to soothe the anxiety
I MADE LOVE TO JACK KEROUAC
by Shawnie Hamer

I find you velvet & crooked
I want to erase that line
but I can’t bring myself to it
it’s jazz, honey, hot sweat love
affair, you standing there
ready to pounce
pop
dance
pouring a drink to warm my belly
you always do the trick
you’re July in the fireplace
burning, moving closer
my knees are blowing daisies
& circling hip bone, whispers
in my ear lips, thirsty for swill thrill
it’s a greenhouse garden in this room
it’s New York City on a Friday
afternoon buzzing
touch of sax brass
brush me there, voice croons
songs of west coast faces
I miss it & you recreate bed
sheets, rough enough for walls
paper peeling, arching wave backs
beach hold on, toes curled
like me
you can’t take sea out of
rhythm, breathing
I can’t take you out
perpetual drowning
flooding me all night
this is love, baby
this is knowing heroes
are cracked ice in whiskey

TO BE READ
by Jerrod E. Bohn

after gazing at an erotic photo of someone to whom you
didn’t make love:

machines swept the roads last night
clear of leaf-remnants so unimpeded
the moon walked over tar
vestiges of a dream wherein
androgynous rooms chose their sex
neutered out of walls that turned
genitals inward to face the other
asleep in a grafted bed
brush-whir piling useless parts
into gutters a decision to rise
to forget nothing’s tongue
touched brows & spoke thighs
before replacing one’s ear with a spindle:

speak in unrhymed couplets & walk
as if grinding clay into casings for ancestors

believe that you are a child you
ceased being a child your first
word is a child you were born
b/c an infant god hungered

your grandfather’s green chair
covered in fruit we did not have
names for conjuring you sat on
his lap before you were born

of a blue rupture every nascent throat
necessitates its own demise

before attempting to recreate the previous day:

when breath is a stitch of swallows when
touch is a parable of pigeons when wings

leave their impressions inside elbows
a single vulture becomes sheet music

captured in the blue-dawn mouth a blur
of new distinction the unfelt joint

pleats to pink-dressed wind that morning
is a vestibule of crows come hymning

the knuckle now felt knuckle now
joined so as to sing harmonies of

starlings hemmed into a blackbird sun
of first melodies when breath becomes
I grew up believing cornfields were playgrounds, wandering through the stalks, my boots drowned in mud. Once I departed the field into the horse pen and dashed to the other side, racing the horse before I tripped and landed on the rocks, trampled beneath hooves. My stepfather told me I needed to man up. I was only five when I learned to bury my feelings like I buried my pet rabbit after discovering it mangled by our dog, Wolf, and strewn about the yard. It reminded me of watching my uncle skin a deer, slung up a tree by its hind legs. Its organs slipping through the incision along its stomach, a thunderstorm of blood. Or seeing a raccoon tumble from the treetops and snapping its neck on the ground among the leaves. It wasn’t dead when it hit the dirt. My stepbrother once shoved firecrackers down a frog’s throat near the row of five-foot tall sunflowers behind the chicken-coop. I felt remorseful as the fuses sluggishly sizzled. We controlled death there. We were God on every day but Sunday. There was no escape from the country roads tucked between those familiar cornfields, where pavement is a luxury and speed limits are ignored. Isolation was like cancer gnawing on our brains. Did we crave death or accept it? When we were teenagers we smoked cigarettes in the truck to be dope, to be rebellious, to feel the smoke warm our lungs, to forget we were no longer children and the cornfields were a fallen fort. I once watched a boy wearing full cowboy apparel attempt to ride on a sheep for eight seconds in the dilapidated county fair arena while the crackling loudspeaker played ‘Friends in Low Places.’ It took twenty years to find my low place, where I drank my whiskey on the rocks with a side of Hydrocodone. But I wrestle sheep in my dreams instead of counting them, I cut the deer at the throat to bleed them out. And the cornfields ambush me in the middle of the night, surrounding me, suffocating me, begging me to stay, because the horses don’t trample when I have nowhere else to run.
A BLOODLESS MURDER IN SAI KUNG
by Ng Chun Lung, Daniel

She bathes in a foam box,
her temporary tank,
filled with filthy water on a cobalt boat
with a man chanting, “come and take a look,”
as she swims invertedly,
waiting to be sold, or eaten.—
(but she will never know)
—The angler with a cigarette
in his teeth grabs her tail and tosses her
onto a wooden chopping board.
He begins his ritual
with a comb-like weapon
to skin her scales away,
like the momentary sparks
when he flicks the cigarette butt into a metal can,—
gentle detachment—and she ceases to struggle.
The dealer then picks up a rusty knife
to slit open her throat, slash at her body
and a Cantonese joke,
“I can’t even outlive her.”

GERALDINE
by Paisley Kauffmann

Over her spectacles, Geraldine peeked up and down the aisle, lifted the seat of her rolling walker, and stashed a loaf of Wonder Bread into its storage box. In the dairy aisle, she checked her list while waiting for a woman, ranting into her phone, to select a coffee creamer. The woman’s young daughter watched Geraldine with a somber expression. Geraldine stuck her tongue out and crossed her eyes. The girl giggled and returned the gesture. Oblivious, the mother dropped her fancy flavored creamer into the cart and hurried off, whiplashing the child’s neck. Geraldine opened the cooler, and the cold air temporarily fogged her glasses. She tucked a quart of milk into each of the hidden pockets she had sewn into her coat. This added two pounds to her already arthritic shoulders, but she figured it counted as weight-bearing exercise to help combat her osteoporosis. She scanned the aisle and slipped bologna into the American Heart Association bag hanging limply off the front of her walker. Opening a carton of grade A organic free-range eggs, she checked for breakage before setting them on the walker’s seat.

“Good day,” Geraldine said to the man stocking shelves in the cracker and cookie aisle. He nodded, turned his back, and she stuffed a package of Oreos in her waistband.

“Ma’am,” the man said. “Hold up.”
Geraldine held her breath.
He approached her holding out a piece of folded paper. “You dropped this.”
“My grocery list. Thank you, son. I’d be lost without it.”

As Geraldine approached the checkout lane, a clerk with a nose ring and tattoos coloring her arms smiled. Geraldine gaped at the woman’s staggered teeth, more fierce than any of her tattoos.

“Did you find everything okay?” the woman asked, swiping the eggs across the scanner.
“Did you find everything okay?”
“I did.”
“One dollar and seventy-seven cents.”
Geraldine opened her wallet exposing a few crumpled bills, and said, “Oh dear.”

The clerk shrugged politely.
Geraldine picked through the bills and said, “It’s chilly in here, don’t you think?”
The clerk glanced at her bare arms riddled with spiderwebs and skulls with
red supple lips, and said, “I’m okay.”
Handing her a five dollar bill, Geraldine watched the clerk snap it into the register before dropping her wallet on the conveyer belt. As if on cue, several coins clattered and rolled around.
“Oh dear,” Geraldine said.
The clerk helped collect her stray dimes and nickels.
“Thank you,” Geraldine said.
“No problem. Three dollars and twenty-three cents is your change.”
Geraldine pulled her hand back and said, “Where’s the rest?”
The clerk paused before she looked at the register and said, “The eggs were a dollar seventy-seven, and you gave me a five.”
“No, sweetie, I gave you a ten.”
“I’m sure you gave me a five. I punched five dollars into the register.”
Geraldine opened her wallet, held it out for the clerk, and said, “I had a ten and now I don’t. Should we get the manager over here?”
“Here.” The clerk yanked the five from the register and added it to Geraldine’s change.
“Thank you, dear. Have a lovely day.”
The clerk didn’t respond.
Geraldine left the frigid store and walked three blocks to George’s house.
A trickle of sweat ran down the side of her face as she maneuvered her walker down the uneven cement path to George’s front door. Through the screen she hollered, “George? Are you here?”
“Of course.”
“Don’t get up.”
“I won’t.”
Holding the door open with her foot, she wrestled her walker across the threshold, careful not to drop the eggs or lose the Oreo’s from her waistband. Her heart palpitated, and she pressed her palm to her chest until it found a regular rhythm. George, reclined in front of the television, wore checkered golf pants and a striped sweater.
“I thought you went blind, not deaf,” Geraldine said, plucking the remote from his hand and lowering the volume. “You’re not going anywhere today or having visitors, are you?”
“Why? Don’t I match?”
“Never. Ready for some lunch?”
“I’m starving. Did you get bologna?”
“Plus a few other things,” she said.
“Just take what I owe you from my wallet,” George said. “You know where it is.”
In the kitchen, Geraldine unloaded her coat and walker. She inspected a few suspicious items in his refrigerator before she set the milk and eggs on the shelf. Inside an empty box of frozen waffles, George’s wallet was packed tight with cool crisp twenty dollar bills. Geraldine pulled out three, tucked them into her bra, and returned his wallet. She made two bologna sandwiches and carried the plates with a bag of Cheetos under her arm to the living room.
“Here you are,” Geraldine said, placing the plate on his boney lap.
“Got it,” he said and tapped his fingers gingerly across the surface. “Are there chips?”
“No yet.” Geraldine shook the bag of Cheetos over his plate.
They ate in front of the television.
George licked his orange fingertips, and Geraldine took the plates to the kitchen. She squeezed the last squirt of dish soap over the dirty dishes stacked in his sink.
“Do I have any Oreo’s?” George called to her.
“You do.”
“Could you bring me three and a glass of milk?”
Geraldine opened the Oreo’s, filled George’s cookie jar, and put the remainder in her bag. While he finished his cookies, she put clean sheets on his bed, fresh towels in his bathroom, and added dish soap to her shopping list.
“I’d be in a mess without you, Gerry. You’re a good neighbor,” he said as she was leaving.
“You were too, George,” Geraldine said.
“But that was a long time ago.”
“Regardless.”
Geraldine pushed the walker down the street, past the grocery store, to her apartment building. As she waited for the elevator, a young African girl wearing a turquoise garment, a hijab she would later learn, stood next to her. She had a cell phone tucked in the side of her hijab and spoke in a lyrical yet strident language. When the doors opened, Geraldine pushed her walker in, and the girl followed. Geraldine noticed her beaded wallet sticking out the top of her purse. Watching the girl, she leaned forward, reached into her American Heart Association bag, and pulled out the Oreo’s.
“Want one?”
The girl, still speaking into her phone, smiled and shook her head.
Geraldine’s fingertips pinched the fat wallet just as the doors opened and the girl glided out.

In her apartment, she filled the kettle and turned on the stove. The dented aluminum kettle reminded her of Herb, because he had always complained about the smell of her teas. She would never admit it aloud, but she was grateful to drink her Earl Grey in peace. Even his social security had been a disappointment.

Geraldine set the wallet, three twenties from her bra, and five dollar bill from the store on the table. As the kettle rattled, she eyed the brightly colored wallet, carrying a mysteriously pleasant rose scent. She hoped it held at least fifty-four dollars, the rest of the cash she needed for her prescriptions. Her heart medication, already cut into half doses, would only last another five days. Every month, her prescriptions waited in white paper bags at the pharmacy while she purloined the money for their purchase. The whistling kettle startled her. She poured the water, curling with steam, into her mug and sat at the table dunking her teabag. Slowly, she stirred her tea waiting for the cube to dissolve before she took a sip.

Geraldine turned the wallet over and unsnapped the closure. Inside was a photo of dark-skinned people, dressed similarly to the girl, posed arm-in-arm in front of a cement house. A skinny dog scratched at its ear next to the group. They smiled contagiously with broad white teeth, and Geraldine involuntarily grinned back but caught herself and shook her head. She pulled out a student identification card with the girl’s radiant face. Her name was long and difficult to pronounce. According to the identification, she was a nursing student at the local community college. Unzipping a pocket, Geraldine inhaled sharply at the neatly tucked wad of green bills. She organized the money, totaling two hundred sixty-nine dollars, into discrete piles on the table. Geraldine added two twenties, a ten, and four ones to her own stack and returned the rest to the wallet.

On her formal stationary, Geraldine wrote the girl a note inquiring of her interest in a job helping an old blind man in the neighborhood. If so, Geraldine would quit buying her heart medication and make her final arrangements.

MY MOTHER’S LAST BIRTHDAY
by Dan Sklar

the birthday luncheon
they wheel her into the dining room with her wig and alarmed expression
and she is dying before your eyes with an ice cream cake which she cannot taste they bought especially for this and final words “it’s just one of those things” as water comes out of her legs.
YOU COULD SEE THROUGH ME
by Joannie Stangeland

I want to be the anatomical woman,
guts secure in a clear plastic house—
my liver, my twin kidneys and lungs,
plus appendix and spleen tucked away
for a rainy day like the kitchen drawer
filled with junk that might come in handy,
my blood cruising along ropy highways
to its tissue destinations—to see
it all working, all systems go
even when my heart shifts
to my sleeveless arm, each intention
and regret as bright as neon,
my scabs scarred, all my body’s rooms
unlocked, pulse drumming over the speakers,
and here is a bed for you, a lamp for me,
this chamber of books and touch,
with every whisper a sip of listen.
CURTSIES AND BOWS  
by Jada Yee

“Good mornings” dribble from the mouths of men,  
murmuring stubble on pointed chins.

Chins dunked like vanilla cones  
into vats of table crumbs.

“Hellos” are gingerly spoken by the lipstick  
a smile hovering just above its violet, pinkish glow.

Silent lips to wander,  
sealed envelopes afraid to make a blunder.

Two hands rise up  
with their stop sign insignias,  
our most religious hello…

two wrists, to twist…  
four fingers, to bow…  
would be the societal risk.

we shake them out after, like bed linen;  
casting out wrinkles, phantoms and frowns.

SHE CAME OUT FROM UNDER THE BED  
by Jennifer MacBain-Stephens

#1

She came out from under the bed  
rifled through drawers and drapes

a slipped format  
next year’s model

sounds of new build  
sawdust

to fill earholes  
chained malcontent

attempted robbery  
escaped humming

to rouse a dark dawn
She came out from under the bed
brought all legality thunder with her:
procurement contracts and readiness,
repurposed grenades, hag witch catastrophe

She does not know I command steeliness,
record my own shortcomings, rake leaves
from my hair and excavate throat dirt

Her face restyled with stainless steel guilt
and sun filled yesterdays the torso is an
all-night diner

I see the light now, streaming through pinholes

She came out from under the bed
reek ing of salt, a particular stripped away- ness.
Where are the dry counties? She began her riddle: if I am moth filled and you are liquid... Her seagull wings expanded, fish flopped out of her mouth and onto the mattress, seized in depleted oxygen. Fins gesticulated trying to grow fingers, my own palms cold, the scales blinking hello, hello.
#4

She came out from under the bed owning full vulture face

*Don’t worry, I only eat dead things*

I cannot move, I signed. How do you know I am not dead?

*Because you are talking to me*

Maybe I invented you. I am always getting in my own way

*That’s right.*

She started to peck at my upturned wrist,

splayed thigh

#5

She came out from under the bed was all slow song and mother goose rhymes
All bonnet and hot tea and pink raspberries
Her tree bark skin was shaved smooth, the
birds’ nests accumulating on the dresser

*I raised these baby birds, I can do the same for you*

She forced a worm down my throat
from *Exclosures*

*by Emily Abendroth*

**EXCLUSION ]1[**

The people were sometimes given a legal option of deciding their own [sex] [race] [gender] [class] [political affiliation] [hour of maximum ovulation] although a subsequent [medical] [behavioral] [credit] [asset management] [genealogical] or [book shelf & file] examination was invariably required in order to confirm the legitimacy of this selection.

Furthermore, it was insisted – despite “choice” - that each [person] [object] [country] [talisman] [currency] [border collie] had one “true” [value] [diet] [pronoun] [language] [symbolic valence] [uncle] that could only be reliably affirmed by the appropriately accredited [physicians] [internet-based poll] [DNA experts] [psychoanalysis] [handwriting tests] [neo-natal massage].

The “best” “truest” and “most legitimate” [ fill in here ] as determined by morphology, financial solvency, first glance, sociology, or expedience.

Leaving to every actual experiencing body the ponderous task of navigating that discrepancy –

The palpable tension between their own existence and the only existent categories.

The “official logics [surviving] to erase any need to operate outside official logics”?

But always failing there. Both happily and excruciatingly failing there.

---

EXCLUSION

There can be no reducing it
this bitter riff wherein human poverty will necessarily deduce its right to fallen wood
the “privilege” to haul in at least that
when shot upon
when forced to lease whatever miserable material pieces
it might crease or wobble or touch

As tightly bunched as these toes are in this crudely composed shoe
how could we ever propose to unglue or to neatly disaggregate:
the common rights to forests versus the common rights of forests
the official title to the land versus a given human’s entitlement not to starve versus
the vital forces of a thick fir canopy in all of its tense and glimmering autonomy
the progressive parceling or even pulverization of cowering surroundings
versus the power to in some way reject such towering intensifications

HE said:  They tried to survive and they was demonized?
   Why was they demonized?
   What is it you mean in mouthin’ off to me concernin’ what it be that I mean?
   What I be meanin’ is why all the fancy colored streamers?
   Why there no be beams of support HERE?
   Why FEMA?

HE thought:  Only a society like this would dare the self-peril of generating a term
like “pre-delinquents.”

   Only one that malignant could take the words “just desserts” and
re-shirt them into meaning nothing more nor less than the vestments
of a violent and summary retribution, an institutional rationalization
for the wholesale destruction of personhood. The sweet that you once
deserved become the flesh no one bothered to conserve.

In 1836, in Baden [Germany], there was one conviction of woodstealing for every 6.1 inhabitants. By 1841,
there was a conviction for every 4.6. By 1842, one for every 4.8. At what point, if ever, does the ratio
in itself raise the question of who indeed is fleecing the provinces? And to what princely ends? If a veritable
quarter of all humans are officially deemed criminals, how are we to appraise the “clean” records of those
serene specimens who are not, who are scot-free?

HE said:  They tried to survive and they was demonized?
   Why was they demonized?
   What is it you mean in mouthin’ off to me concernin’ what it be that I mean?
   What I be meanin’ is why all the fancy colored streamers?
   Why there no be beams of support HERE?
   Why FEMA?

HE thought:  Only a society like this would dare the self-peril of generating a term
like “pre-delinquents.”

   Only one that malignant could take the words “just desserts” and
re-shirt them into meaning nothing more nor less than the vestments
of a violent and summary retribution, an institutional rationalization
for the wholesale destruction of personhood. The sweet that you once
deserved become the flesh no one bothered to conserve.

ii Statistics taken from “Karl Marx, The Theft of Wood, and Working Class Composition: A Contribution to the
Current Debate” by Peter Linebaugh, Crime & Social Justice 6 (Fall-Winter 1976), 5-16.
EXCLUSION J9[

“The [Onsite check-cashing franchise] does not have a monopoly on exclusionary logics.”

[Elk’s Club]
[Offshore Military Base]
[Nuclear Family]
[Academic Community]
[Bail Bonds Market]
[Single Professionals Social Network]
[Sensor-Activated Motion Detector]

Its territory is fogged in the overlap, both mingled in and re-partitioned amid
the trap housings of others:

a new parapet or palisade, a fading rampart, a bulwark
another workplace checkpoint, an impassable berm
a drug-sniffing vermin squad, an emerging prison hulk
the bulky and overarching chambers of angled steel lattice

“I was treated very nicely,” he said. “Excepting that I was in a state of perfect terror.”

What to make of the fanfare over “crowd movement pattern recognition”? What of “a reef of bombs”?

Its geographic relief a “natural” sheathing of ersatz habitat used exclusively
by military hacks for waste munitions disposal, for blowing up ordnance in an oval
of oceanic proportions.

Today, as the Bering Strait is melting, it opens up new areas of the Northwest passage
allowing for ever greater volumes of long distance transcontinental shipping.

It melts, in significant part, because of the arc of ever greater volumes
of long distance transcontinental shipping.

We grip wildly at this,
by destruction securing our mounting permissions.

The deluge we wished for is kicked to the fore,
tortured into further accommodations.

---

From Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity by Judith Butler (brackets not in original).
EXCLOSURE |13|

In Charles Darwin’s day journal which records his voyages upon the ship The Beagle, including multiple visitations to the Galapagos Islands, he cites the findings of a prior explorer to those very same bioregions, briefly noting to his readers:

Cowley (in the year 1684) says that the “Turtle-doves were so tame, that they would often alight upon our hats and arms, so that we could take them alive: they not fearing man, until such time as some of our company did fire at them, whereby they were rendered more shy.”

Whereby we shy from and are rendered more shy.
Our arms alighted, lit upon, lit up, fired at.

Everything is illuminated.
Everything is eliminated.
There is a phosphorescence.
There is an essence of phosphor in the air.
O how it burns.
O how shyly it burns.

a retinal detonol
an antiseptic precision
the scientific derision
of sanitizing an area
insanitizing an area

we were killing time until killing time
we smoked and then we smoked out all the others
the anxiously charged waiting of waiting to charge

of bowling for jowls
EXCLOSURE [14]

In the winter of 2005, the Wall Street Journal ran a mock-panicked and pedantic front page article which observed that “many workers are not fully participating in the economy’s gains.”

It was a bestial claim, a toothless and lazy echo chamber languorously posing itself as a sentence - a menacing signpost disingenuously aimed at leading its millions of affluence-craning readers into a game of indignant irritation, into a deliberate posture of shunning or a running misapprehension of voluntary refusals. As if each of these randomly scrutinized citizens were intentionally and belligerently failing to give 110% to the contents of their patiently waiting check and savings accounts. As if there were a touted sports match or marketing class that everyone on this whole big-ass planet had signed up for and was now incorrigibly botching, clocking themselves in as the abysmal and ungracious students that they had been so abusively trained to imagine themselves resembling.

It made an individual confused, unable either to properly fuse or to compute the details.

“Could I indeed fully participate in these gains?” one asked.
“Could I be a main player?”
“Could I stop craving?”
“Could I blame?”

“Would it help at all to name these things, in addition to or in defiance of experiencing their shame?”

Question: What prefigures the figure of the modern sniper?
of the online-certified-and-stockpiling-concealed-arms bounty hunter?
of the count-your-riches-and-snitch-on-others futures salesman?
Answer: Your Momma.

Question: What anticipates the face of the urban ghetto mortgage broker?
of the long distance predator drone crony?
of the home-grown carbon emissions bondswoman?
Answer: Who’s your daddy now, huh?
Say it, baby.
Taste it.

Who’s your goddamn Daddy?
When She Finally Let Go
W. Jack Savage

DID I TELL YOU HOW I GNASHED
by Magdalene Fry

the sky away from the sky;
had you been there
I would have swallowed you
like fire on the woods.
The keen in your face melting
away with my head, or tried to
at least, and I would have
ripped the moon out of the
sky and plugged it into your eye
just like you wanted, just like you
were. I would and would have,
just like you, drinking cemeteries
toasting, for you too are what’s
red in autumn and the longing
across the limbs of trees.
THE TERRACES
by Ray Gonzalez

after Lorca

No one sleeps on the terraces.
The river's mouth flows there.

The night plucks out the crocodiles eyes.
Boys finally weep, then sleep.

Each magnet bruises the heart as
swallows on crutches save the world
from having to witness the stars' alignment,
so one boy can surrender.

Water never reaches the sea.
It teaches the knees of the old man to bow,
his agony darkened by the book of death,
a tale written after the iguanas bit the first man,
showing him the green terraces are where
his heart is exiled, condemned to scratch
his sleeping feet so the reptile that enters
knows the imperfect anguish of the dance.

DIALOGUE WITH A HOUSEHOLD GUEST
by Tom McLaughlin

Clinging to the bedroom wall, a gecko
watches unwearyingly as you sleep
the sleep of the tropics: still,
untroubled, while outside the rain
is steadily flooding the city.
You don't yet hear his occasional chirp.

You will wake to the chirp
of a digital alarm, reminder of the gecko's
peaceful fellowship in this city
where you have no family, where sleep
binds the ragged thoughts of rain
that in your mind is falling even still.

In the conjunto, the air is perfectly still.
Deaf to the quiet chirp
underneath the evening rain,
you don't yet think of the gecko
as a guardian, nourishing your sleep
with his presence in this raucous city.

The rain has brought the city
to a total stand-still.
You have fallen asleep.
In a dream, the chirp
of the household gecko
echoes though the rain.

Unwelcome thoughts rain
down unchecked as the city
wakes to an injured dawn. The gecko
has disappeared from the wall. Still,
in your mind his rhythmic chirp
is lulling you into a dead sleep.
Wash your face: wipe the sleep from rested eyes and go out into the rain. Your mobile phone chirps impatiently (a friend from the city texting to check if you’re still coming to that party). Without the gecko’s chirp, only traffic’s quarrel fills this city, asleep to the beauty of its rain. You practise being still as a gecko.

EVALUATION BLUES
by Roy Dorman

“So, Ed, where ya wanna go for lunch?” asked Gary Wilson, poking his head over the divider of Ed Water Spaniel’s cubicle.

“Oh, I dunno,” said Ed. “How ‘bout Mickey D’s?”

Ed and Gary left the office and rode the elevator down to the main floor. Gary would have preferred a burger at Larry’s Pub & Grill, but he knew Ed sometimes had trouble getting back to work after a beer or two at lunch. He didn’t want to tempt him.

“So, what did ya think of that e-mail that came down from above this morning?” asked Gary. “Before they start making changes in the way we do things, they could at least get our input.”

“That bitch thinks she knows everything, even though she’s never spent a day down in the trenches,” said Ed.

“Whoa, that ‘not liking to work for a woman’ shtick is sort of old school, Ed. You should get over that.”

Ed veered from the center of the sidewalk and lifted his leg to pee on a fire hydrant. “It’s not so much that she’s a woman, but more that she’s a goddamn cat. I’m a dog workin’ for a cat for chrissakes. You humans have your basic instincts under control better than most of us animals is all I can say.”

Walking toward them on the same side of the street were Sally Simpson from Being Resources and the big boss, Kitty Siamese. “Now, don’t do anything dumb like growl or something, Ed. Evaluations are coming up next month, and I need a good one.”

“Why, hello, guys,” purred Ms. Siamese. “Nice day, isn’t it?”

Ed just stared, and Gary thought that their boss’s back arched a little bit. She then walked up to Gary and made a couple of figure-eights between his legs, rubbing against him and purring as she did so.

As Sally and Kitty walked on, Gary shrugged and felt a little less anxious about the upcoming evaluation. Ed, however, sat back on his haunches, put his face toward the sky, and let forth a mournful howl.
DAD’S BARK

by Robert Ronnow

Dad’s bark is worse than his verse.
When he hits it doesn’t really hurt.

The dirt outside the house is soil.
The mouse inside the house is life.

Can’t escape the printer or the car, IV
bag, heart monitor, a billion trillion stars.

Snow descends, each flake unique.
My sons’ friends, each infinitely

a Greek or Trojan hero. Our morals:
hit not the girls, nor rape. Love more

than you are loved, by a little. Give
but stop before it hurts. Stand together

or fall apart. Which candidate you vote
for less important than to vote. Don’t

depend or dote on leaders, housekeeper
and president are gods equally

remote. The human body is a thing of
bone, a strange upright animal, and the

telephone a mystery to other animals.
Everyone and everything is spinning

electrons and the space between.
A great crunch, inverse of big bang,

yr big sister told.
I CALLED MY DAD SATAN

by Jerrod Schwarz

with the same knowledge of a just-hatched tadpole.

murk.
my own limbs.
eyes to hunt, to not get eaten.

Silent drive from Plant City to Lakeland; the first time
Dad does not quiz me on who sings what country song.

catfish tail slaps me into a twirl.
light, the lake floor, light, the lake floor.
dizziness.

My I didn’t mean it withers into the lit up EXIT NOW sign.
Dad drives exactly the speed limit and asks me if I know
that he loves me.

awake to almost darkness, moon threads.
brothers, sisters, humans, everything sleeps.
i should not be hungry, i should be asleep.

My weakest Yes Sir because now an adult can be wrong

and scared. The radio is still off, the speed limit still
followed, and Mom’s house still a mile away.

a pipe.
inside, all the algae I could eat, safety.
a splash, the alligator no one else sees.
half-eat bird head sinks out of moonlight.
murky does not mean empty.

CHELLENESHIN, NR. 22, OIL ON CANVAS, 40”x 30”, 2015
Yari Ostovany
APOSTASY
by Charles O'Hay

One day a mouth opened in the world. Some fled from it, thinking it might be hungry. Others ran into it, attempting to extract the gold from its molars. Bats swooped in and out of the mouth, catching mosquitoes and gnats. A group of spiritualists constructed a giant wicker ear to gather any wisdom that might spill from the mouth. But one day the mouth closed and vanished without ever saying a word. An old man said, “Perhaps the world was merely turning in her sleep,” and was abruptly stoned to death for his crime.

THE MAN IN MY KITCHEN CABINET
by Joseph Buckley

He doesn’t wear clothes. His beard and hair have grown into a single tangle that twirls and twines its way around his gnarled, root-like limbs. Contorted into the cubical space he resembles a blinking bush that, given enough sun, may overrun the kitchen. One of his hands he raises above himself, this holds a cupboard in place. His other hand is looped through the handle of my favorite coffee mug. The one with a cat’s face on the front and its rear on the rear.

I ask, “May I please use that mug?” He says, “I’m sorry, I cannot. This mug tells me the future.” I reply, “It’s very important to me.” He says, “This mug is very important to me.” He holds it up to his ear. I say, “What’re you doing? You’re getting it dirty.” He says, “Listening to the future.” He places the mug over his mouth and mumbles words I can’t hear. I say, “What’re you saying into that mug?” He says, “Possible answers.” I say, “Answers to what?” He says, “The future wonders how this can be without me.” What’s this? I thought to myself. He says, “This is your future and quite some mug.”
THE LEGEND OF NOUN BUTT

by Alex Vigue

noun butt
hero of the story
oh noun butt save us
groundbreaking twinks
sinking bears
bear it
noun butt
who named you?
did you receive yourself the title?
first queer birth
dear noun butt,
I’m gonna play to be sad.
“Every Millennial Ever”
-story of a murder

what’s a telephone?
transphone into cellphone
unwatch something
sit back with ice cream, wine, and genocide
it’s instant on Netflix
heard from noun butt
Hash tag you’reatinghummus
tired of humor
it’s all we have
I am noun butt!
creator of phailed myths!
phake phucker!
ph imbalance!
it’s what the phallus has done to us
to quote myselph
This is Dying.

QADDIYSH
Vance Osterhout
BLIZZARD WARNING
by Owen Oxley Hamill

BLIZZARD
your mistress is on my couch and
the apartment is cold
earlier, we cupped our hands
and breathed into them
our breath, warm and visible
clinging to the corners of the room like cobwebs
where my TV is
there used to be a window
but the view hasn't changed
cable lines downed by
snow falling outside
on an empty channel
they say the roads are too icy to drive
so she murmurs in her sleep

WARNING
the power has been out all day
and the saltines are crumbling
on our lips
I lay next to her
words pluming out of our mouths
she looks at a spot on the wall
as she tugs my ear and whispers,
I can't see him anymore
since I closed my eyes
the sound of her voice
like fuzzy static
on an endless loop
she says she knows you aren't coming
that you are dead

APOLOGY
by Robert F. Gross

Forgive me for breaking into your picture window wedding without a career or deodorant. I was passing by and couldn’t help but lean into your life when I saw you on that slab sleek as a smartphone.

I knew I mustn’t touch but couldn’t resist the circuitry lying there.

Forgive me for being past the age of consumer credit but there is something irresistible about something without wrinkles and memory gaps. I am picking the splinters out of my groin and will reassemble the hymen when I get the chance.

I simply wanted to catch the bouquet with my teeth and tear it to shreds. I didn’t expect it to break into laughter.

Forgive me for not being able to consummate a business deal on the wedding night. I left my testicles in the albino limousine. I was thinking about mass psychosis.

About phagocytes in the champagne.

I knew the rice wasn’t organic and free range. I didn’t expect it to be napalm.

Forgive me for taking a claw hammer to your vacuum-packed kiss. For deleting the file with the monogamy insurance. For leaving the corpse that looked like me on the day bed in the viewing room while I went out to a smoke a joint.

I’ve grown addicted to premature ejaculation on the graveyard shift.

Forgive me for bleeding on your wedding cake. For not remembering the lyrics to the Neiman Marcus catalog. For having flashes of Emma Goldman and Medea walking down the aisle.

I forget to throw the switch.
TAKE ME HOME  

by Stephen Mead

Thanksgiving, not the food so much or day off, those luxuries, pie-nice, but the voices, in no hurry yet alive there & traditionally gathering amid prejudices for a few minutes set aside I believe because we’ve been living as if in a car suddenly plunging down through waves: electric windows, doors sealed, water rising until we arrived beyond panic to the point of recognition which said: sing, whisper, kiss or simply, intently reach out a hand, embrace fully feeling while there is time. I believe that destination, its touch is the wanting, the private dream of someone, the family’s assigned or unassigned black sheep thinking: let me take home my lover, the wrong sex, the wrong color, the wrong income, the wrong religion & still know accepting arms as I know each bump of his spine, how his sighs, laughter hints past sadness that there will be fresh snow & crocuses further under to run on tasting mist, giddy white bits eternally new as the house, the land stands—can’t it—for once not divided

STRING MESSAGES THROUGH ORANGE JUICE CANS  

by John McKernan

I told the child kissing his tears Sell everything  
Invest in blue sky

I told the woman with the Bowie knife Listen  
only to music from the wind chimes while fasting

I told my father Stop dying Lift up your cancer cells and start marching You’ll never disappear

I told the bridge Appear over rising water Carry  
these bones I will dismount from the horse

I told the tomato and the broccoli and the chicken Be quiet while I eat you and lick your shadows

I told the alphabet Thank you for your stunning performance especially the word tomorrow

I told my father Where are you? Why have you wrapped yourself in silence?  

I told myself I want to be that pile of dirt outside the kitchen window

I told myself You are a fool Don’t worry  
You will be Soon
I have seen them. I have seen them all, young and old, woman and man, street-schooled and ivy league-ed; I have seen them broken and disheveled, wandering the office halls at dawn.

Pocket-holstered hipsters searching for coffee after up-all-night nights looking for some secret correlation to explain a trend, a deal, a bid. Who glimpsed the secret correlation but lost sight of it when the sun came up, and the office lights came on.

Excel junkies who cut their teeth on Lotus but quit cold turkey for tabs and links and ease of charting and extra columns and rows.

Pioneering data gophers writing queries in Fortran and D-base or CoBI trying to find the truth, any truth, only to see those truths distorted by marketing and sales in their ugly quest of more and more dollars.

Outcomes-agnostic technicians, who taught themselves SQL and SAS and dug deeper and deeper into the heart of the data. Who wrote code and parsed data and changed code and poured over output and dove ever deeper still looking for the Higgs particle of a trend. And who, upon a moment, saw it, beheld it, only to be crushed by its elegant simplicity.

Jowl-quivering pixel addicts staring at screens; blinded by the sight; unable to turn their gaze lest it vanish.

Wobble-kneed stylus biters overwhelmed by the unanswerable question of whom to tell and the impossible task of how. How to express a consequential truth and compress irrefutable revelations in PowerPoint, all mighty PowerPoint?

[PowerPoint, unholy god of business growth.
PowerPoint, purveyor of common business lies.
PowerPoint, protector of corporate funding.
PowerPoint, square hole for the square peg.
PowerPoint, justifier of mass layoffs.
PowerPoint, they teach you in the second grade now.
PowerPoint, the way to a man’s heart.
PowerPoint, I give good deck, why can’t I be a manager?
PowerPoint, imperial truths must be conveyed not displayed.]

Ends-justifying altruists turning to the helpdesk to ask which template we use for corporate? Which for investors? Which on Tuesdays?

Pride swallowing missionaries condensing six month’s work into pie charts
even a child could understand but who did not know how to start.

Post thesis realists who knew the game was up and went at last to marketing for presentation assistance. Who got presentation assistance from message-twisting cube-climbers and saw their findings minimized as intriguing observations to be studied further.

Alas, I see them now. Decaf sipping congregators in the food court at the mall of could-have-been, telling tales of causes lost. I knew, says one, and the others nod for they knew too. They raise a cup to Wally Pipp and dream of a land where data rules and logic reigns. I look not for I have seen them. I have seen them all.

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**PENGUINS ON PARADE IN PRAGUE**

*by Tim Kahl*

In our initial investigation we launched 32 penguins into the Moldau River in order to measure the increase in water temperature due to the rapid excitement in the creatures whose antics delighted tourists on the nearby Charles Bridge. One tourist imitated the fin flip of a bird, suddenly relaxed by the prospect of having eluded all its predators, and this mimicry sparked a dance craze all across Quebec. Such behavior, however, cannot be witnessed via satellite and, therefore, cannot be confirmed, even though it has been predicted that certain rare instances of hip shaking in mature waterfowl have further destabilized the hypergiants passing through the galaxy’s Yellow Evolutionary Void. Opinions vary on whether any significant effect is seen on rogue elephants in the Serengeti, rubbing their rumps on the sausage tree so the fruit may fall. It is reported that if such fruit is hung in a hut, there will be no whirlwinds that day, but proof for this claim has only been detectable by schoolchildren during games of “Whatever Squeaks your Squirrel” and should not serve as guide to further useful action in the absence of any other evidence. Careful observers have remarked, *why the hell would you want to act that way, anyway?*

In our second experiment, we named all 32 penguins and once again let them frolic in the Moldau to determine if a name given to them by a human would develop a greater attachment in penguins to our motion pictures. First, let me say a few words about the index of attachment we used. Little League ballplayers were taught the names of grasses during one of their pre-season sleepover practices and then the number of times was counted when any of the players invoked a named blade of grass during a pivotal moment in a game. Repeated instances of invoking the names of grasses were attributed to the breakdown of a baserunner’s internal resistance to feeling rather than any shadowy intervention of the baseball gods. A full fledged dialog or chanting a litany of names was considered a complete conversion to emotional attachment. In the same manner we noted the number of times a penguin pursued a lateral action...
after viewing a film. After watching Gone With the Wind just once, John and Martha fell into a torrid affair that ended due to their split allegiances to The South Pole. Their children, however, went on to hold film careers, though all were tragically killed as extras during the making of March of the Penguins. Lemony Snicket and Captain Kangaroo fared much better as a gay couple after watching a series of raucous musicals. But starting with the fifth penguin, an independent male named El General, in an act of sheer defiance that surprised all of us, he uttered, *I'm Chief Kamanawanalea. Penguins 6 through 32 quickly followed with* And we're the Royal Macademia Nuts, rejecting any form of screen attachment we thought possible and reasserting their group identity as a species. The last we saw of them, they were floating on their backs under the Charles Bridge down the Moldau River, but later they issued a statement that made it clear they wished to have no association with Hollywood because of its heedless depiction of slaughtering innocent and helplessly stupid animals such as humans.

In summary, we have concluded it is unnecessary to delay further the acceptance of the mutual flow between all points universal; it is possibly hostile to reason even as reason may be poison to an instinctive animal. Furthermore, the buffer between self and environment should be revisited every decade to determine if it is still relevant, and follow-up studies should be conducted to elucidate whether The Captain and Tennille were right — love will keep us together. Finally, we assert that it is good for children to imitate animals but even better for adults to spray food out of their mouths onto each other’s bodies as signs of undying affection.
**IT COMES TO THIS**  
*by Dan Sklar*

Today you guess
you were thinking
of quitting
writing
and just sitting
in coffee shops
without a pen
and notebook
like an old man
eating a corn
muffin with black
coffee listening
to the world,
staring at the
Sunoco Station
across the street.
Maybe not like
an old man—
an actual old man
who rides
his bicycle
at five AM
out of habit.
Other old men
talk to you.

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**HER KIND**  
*by Toti O’Brien*


Life is a tunnel. Two holes, at the two extremities. They call them morning,
night.

Two holes: you get out of the first one, crawl down the ladder. Those rungs are
kind of shaky, too wide. You are afraid you’d slip in between. You could. You have
lost enough weight.

You could even squeeze behind the drywall, in the tiny space left between it
and the concrete. You have been thinking about it. Did you? When your son’s
stuffed animal fell. You spent hours fishing for the toy: why? Did you have all that
time to waste? Were you seeking some perverse satisfaction? You fished the toy
with a hooked rod, after having relentlessly probed depth and darkness. It wasn’t
needed. You know that, do you?

Life is a tunnel and that is reassuring. You only have to squeeze out of a hole,
then crawl till the next hole. That will bring you back to the first hole—though it
isn’t the same one, properly speaking. I mean: it’s still number one—just another
number one. I mean: there is this uncountable series of ones and twos, like in
square dance. Exactly. You are familiar with the concept: quite a simple one. Square
dancing: a long row of couples. Very, very long: a bunch of people, all different, so
to speak. Diverse, so to speak. And the couples are numbered as follows: one, two,
one, two, one, two. Either you are a one or a two. Then, at some point, the ones
become twos and vice versa.

Does it happen with night and day? It could. Meaning—there’s increasing
smoothness in their alternating. If you crawl lowly, evenly, head down—and
perfectly mute—in the end, night and day truly resemble each other. I promise.

Now don’t look around. Look at the task. Focus on your task, stay with it.
When you are about to finish, think about the next one without leaving a gap.
Pay attention: I know you’re fond of interstices. You like squeezing in. Crawling,
coiling, hiding in.

Your bed, for instance. Bed is an interstice. You like squeezing in it, do you?
And dream. Tell me, though. What can you possibly dream of?

*  

There is a pole. A telegraph pole, old style, remember? Not a phone tower, no.
A brown telegraph pole, made of wood. All around, the landscape is desolate. I don’t mind: who cares about the landscape? The sky is afire: it must be sunset, but I’m not truly aware of time, and it doesn’t matter. It doesn’t because I am tied here: my foot shackled to the pole—though the chain is long enough. Very long, in fact. When you’re chained, it doesn’t matter what time it is. I mean; you can’t switch to the next activity, you can’t progress...

My activity is repetitive, but intense. I run forward, to the end of the line: the end of the chain, I mean. When the chain stops me, I turn around. I rest my back against the wooden pole: it is wider than me, just enough. A good rest—of varied duration: as I was saying, time doesn’t matter. When I’m rested, I start over.

Forward, obviously, is everywhere. All is ahead of me, but the pole. The loop drawn by the chain around the wood is loose enough: it easily slips around. I run at three hundred and sixty degrees, with complete freedom of perspective. I have traced all possible radiuses to this circumference. Then I have started again, randomly. Believe me: there’s no end to this task.

There is joy in my doing. My body exults in the effort. Speed exhilarates me, and I’m growing faster and faster. I feel my muscles strengthen by the hour. The minute? I have no clue. I don’t know about time; it has no relevance. But speed does. I’m going faster and faster. You see: I thrust myself forward, entirely—no reserve at all. It is dazzling, extreme. I can only do this because I’m attached... I mean, you should try: there’s no risk whatsoever, no fear. At the end of the run, when I’m about to stop dead—yanked back—I lift slightly from the ground. I swear: it started happening at a certain point. Now it never fails. At the very end, with the last step or two, I am lifted, suspended for a fraction of breath, an inhalation. This is what I look for, three hundred and sixty degrees around. This is what I live for. Now leave me alone.

* Wake up. You have been turning and tossing in your bed. You have been moaning. You are drenched in sweat. I’m afraid you got a bug. Take your temperature. You should stay in bed today: call work, say you are sick. Why don’t you? Why don’t you ever take a break? See you tonight.

* Life has narrowed down to a tunnel—made of regular segments. I like the regularity. The predictability. This is all I can handle: a segment, a piece of tube. I don’t mind the material. It could be plastic—one of my child’s toys. A toy: that is fine with me.

I don’t need diversions: they only confuse me, hindering my progression. They make me vacillate. I like snug and narrow—more than all, linear.

I don’t eat more than necessary. It distracts me. Now, less and less is necessary. I know: it’s the effect of repetition. Habit, someone would say. The less I eat, the less I need—and that helps the linearity—that is paramount, as you can guess. Leading me through the tunnel.


Now you ask if there is an end to the tunnel. Why should there be? What should I expect at the end? A wide expanse? Freedom?

You mean borderless chaos. You mean the sky. I wasn’t made for the sky.

* The less you eat, the more your bones become brittle. And the more they break. Small bones break very easily: those with the width of twigs—fingers, toes, ribs. Ribs can break spontaneously: with a cough, a laugh, a brisk motion. I don’t laugh. Sometimes I move briskly. Recently I’m coughing more and more. I am breaking lots of ribs. They hurt—moderately—and then they heal. Spontaneously. I’m not in control of my ribs.

There’s a sense of exhilaration when they break. For a minute (is it so?) I am confused. I don’t know what happened. There’s a snap, a sense of humiliation. Then I enjoy it. The suspension, I mean. The looseness. The small gap: that hint of a way out.

My ribcage has broken all over—only, not at the same time. It has broken, I could say, at three hundred and sixty degrees. As long as I’m so thin, so ethereal, it will keep breaking. Could I breathe more easily, through this loosened cage? Will it end up bursting, exploding? I dream about it, in those segments I call nights.

But you see, I am not a bird, wasn’t made that. Will not become one, not in this life.

In this life, I crawl. And I dream.
against my position
and be public
 come there but not inside
we scan scandalous surface that knock bastards
from their poles
and old these words are worthless
 but how much?
If I spit in your father’s mother’s face
and didn’t hold the door and tripped
the mentally challenged and farted in
your fish bowls and used the middle
finger to express my displeasure at no one in particular
and cut my toenails in interviews
where I disrespect women and minorities and expose selves
to people and place violent
 vomit in children’s swimming pools
and blew smoke in your dog’s face
 until cancer
and licked all the candy and ice cream
and dipped my dick in the soup
 until cream
and denounce denounce denounce till die
Would you like-see-know me
and these words are worthless
 but how much?
Can I have three dollars for
 an ass
or forty five for
 a pesticide?
How much is a blank worth
 after a gun shot drink off on late night?
I find the best value in value regardless of the values cost.
Come find the against so I can be supported
 and I’ll feel bad or great but at least I’ll have gotten there
 and worthless
VIRGIN STREETLIGHTS

by Emily W. Recchia

I am the clumsiest smoker I know.
My mouth is curved in permanent surprise,
my tongue lifting smoke and stifling the glow.
I kneel on dirt, heels pressed under the sky.

I’ve left my keys inside my pillowcase.
I do not mind sleeping alone outside;
my room will smell gentler without the waste.
Strange litter glints through darkness with slow eyes.

My father warned me never to mix sound
into the quiet senses of the night.
I trace soft epigraphs into the ground
and break sticks under shy virgin streetlights.

This parking lot looks emptier up close.
I place bets against headlights, rows and rows.

CABBAGES

by Emily W. Recchia

A woman puts cabbages in her neighbor’s mailbox. Her neighbor is also her husband. She attaches a bouquet of snails and writes “sorry” in yellow twist-tie letters. The snails are sorry, too. He told her last night that his face hurts when he thinks of her. It was selfish and unromantic; it made her love him more. She doesn’t think about him as much as she should. She tries not to.

Her neighbor’s teeth sleep calmly in the dark, unfettered by the cobwebs painted across the ceiling each morning. She doesn’t like the quiet. When the weekdays are too practical, she chips paint off of the doorframe and cuts the telephone cord with black shears. This makes him work harder for her conversation.

You entered this marriage on purpose, he says. You aren’t allowed to be surprised I stayed the same. Yes, she says. But I wasn’t counting on you to hide my friends.
TRANSPORT  

by Dion Farquhar

the faux-freedom
the despair
of Sundays
oh, clocks ...and calendars
in the crosshairs
dogged like Diogenes

in Kabul, there’s a steel-gated women’s private park
protected by armed guards and high walls
women take off their burkahs, put on high heels
do each other’s makeup

such is freedom
another floating signifier
what’s forbidden there
is mandated here

...meaning...was not inside like a kernel but outside

something scuttled
beggar[ing interrogation

hollow men               magical                 with horns and haloes

the Hegelian of Flemington (New Jersey)
found me on Facebook

falling           surviving
within three days of getting on

goaded by my Minnosotan proto-son

Internet faster
than a speeding locomotive

high speed whisper smooth
wisking provincials off
to cities or bookstores
and the other way around
opening the respite

of forest and beach
to urbanites

meanwhile

back in the real world
cover ups
toxic spills impermeable to clean-up
leaks they can’t plug

veni vidi wiki

nectar-quaffing
always laughing
oh, so happy

making all this up
because I can’t help myself—
still wanting

to transform the totality

wanting my cake and eating it too:
the prerogative of crumbs
The bruise her heel tattooed is a puddle matching the Pensacola pictured in Polaroids of her and me faded on orchid velamen beaches where night fell and we orbited the beach sober, side-by-side and slowly oscillating from feet stuck in sand like oysters that she salted and slid down her throat.
Seven p.m. Nowhere to go. The lovemakers are in there love making. Like rabbits, birds. When I say 'lovemakers' I think of my friend . I imagine it comes to this: "And here's the problem. You want love but you have a conflict of conflict. You have a disagreement of conflict. You want love like a box with pieces inside. The pieces are dumped out; the box is done away with, and no difference, you put the pieces together. But you know how bored you are of what you master. The pieces are put together just the way you want them. It looks how you wanted it, talks like it, every act, every thought. And that's fine for a time. A time until you know what the pieces are going to say. You're scrambling again, looking for the box. Put the pieces away. Hide the box away. Start over building something else. It was a failure. Deep sighs and low brows and the torment you lay upon yourself that nobody's good enough. You don't know that what kept you interested all along was some unexplainable building process that wasn't supposed to 'get finished.' You wanted the product. You go around with your eyes like a house inspector—what needs fixed, what'll do, what should have never been done. You're too smart and you're not smart enough to see you're too smart. But you won't belittle yourself; you're not going to make yourself small and sit at the threshold waiting for the door to be opened, as if there were fires on the other side that could actually keep you warm."

And what's the difference, what is it? I throw my head around. Seven p.m. There's nowhere to go. There, there's manure in the air. Six buildings with four businesses. Smoke exhales from three of them. One of them smells like manure. One of them, the shit's in their ingredients, or they're cooking with it. Or they are simply making shit. It's nearby. I lift my shoes, and maybe it's there. But it's raining. It's gone already or it will be. Trying to smell lighting a cigarette. That's done. "Murder mystery," "true crime," "cooking with shit," "why is there so little space for so much to do?" "I'm going for a walk," I said, but I said it to no one. "He was frustrated, and he went for a walk." I only think that to myself.

When I say walk, it was already premeditated that I was going to the coffee shop. The walk is to somewhere, but no one would come looking for me if it weren't anywhere I was going. And no one knew about the walk to begin with. Jesus. Shit. Slamming the door. Leaving: I make a break for it.

All the anguish in the world would do when there was a woman who would take you back to bed. You turn aside. "Ah, all the efforts. Shit" You throw the die
again: seven, two and two. You wish you could throw a die and see where it lands.

“I have to hide in my own room.” “I have to hide in my own world.” “I have to hide
in my own body.” Leaning on your hand. The die themselves are death. You want
to throw death. Is it a number? Can it be played? A trump? Like a joker? Is it an
aesthetic of the game? You take a drink. Pretty girls blink right when you look at
them: they’ve seen what you’ve done. Girls come: the game is insignificant and
over. Should you blow on them—the die or the girls? “Why do you get so angry all
the time? You pull your jacket away like somebody offended it and storm off. You
grun. You leave the voices screaming to themselves. It’s what I come to see every
time. It’s like a beautiful dance. Nobody thinks about when the couple departs
that it’s part of the dance. When you pull your jacket the music’s stopped. And
you can’t stand it in the middle of everyone just standing there. It means you’ve
lost. You’ve had enough of foolish steps that led nowhere—although to be fair,
you tried. And better, you’ll try again. You don’t know why but until you’ve said
to hell with it, you love it. Not like your depression, your subjective ecstasy, but
you love it. Maybe because it’s what gets you there, to that flood that makes sense
of how dry everything was. But you only get up on the horse again because you’re
so damn sick of your point of view. It becomes new again once you’ve been taken
for a run, the same world from a different place. The foolish steps, on the horse,
‘it’s bound to make sense one of these days,’ in these things you’ve been drawn
with the idea it will break open into something new. You want the eventual in the
origin. But you’ve sat at a table that is your lifetime—once in a while I wish you’d
play to lose but I’m afraid it would be nothing like dancing to you then—if you
played like that you would have already won and then you’d give up. A giving
up of no return. Then you’d really drown. And your jacket wouldn’t fly off like a
cape. You would degrade yourself with foolish steps and die on the floor, wilted
there. Having never thrown death. But be careful and enjoy yourself, determined
one. Remember death is when it ends. And when it ends what will there be to
play then? It’s utter chance. But I blow on them anyway. This is why: because it’s
inseparable from the eventual. It’s an admission of my own involvement. A sign.
You want to win too hard to be able to play. Blow, dance, run, fly—that’s death
you’re throwing, death.”

WHEN I’M ON A DATE A DATE WITH YOU
AND YOUR BLOOD ALCOHOL LEVEL
GETS TO BE STRONG I...

by Alex Vigue

I’m a famous writer I’m a famous writer I’m a famous writer I’m a famous writer
I’m a famous writer I’m a famous writer I’m a famous writer I’m a famous writer
I sit on the floor in tears and watch as he dances with other men and kisses other
men and fucks other men and loves other men and holds other men’s hands in
secret while waiting for the elevator!

When I’m a famous writer I’ll stop writing
I’ll run around wearing nothing at all and carrying a label maker
I’ll label all of the water fountains [make out machine]
I’ll label office buildings [sex club]
I’ll put labels on people too
the president will be labeled [mega cutie]
the mail carrier will be labeled [best friend]
the dentist will be labeled [mr./mrs./mx. clean]
I’ll label my cat [rude] and my ex best friend [sorry] and my first love [gratitude]
and my parents [tom] and [jerry] respectively
I’ll label my best friend’s boobs [January] and [the finisher] because I think it’s
funny
I’ll label my penis [Robert Oppenheimer] because I think it’s funny
I hope I never run out of that weird plastic that labels are printed on
I hope I never have to stop
A READER’S GUIDE TO THIS POEM

by Jon Morgan Davies

What is this poem about? How does the form relate thematically? On which ideas of criticism does this poem rely?
Who speaks? Who listens? Is the one who reads not core? How much does what you think about the poem and speaker echo your own self?
From where do your reflections stem? Which texts?
CONTRIBUTORS

WRITERS

Abigail George briefly studied film at the Newtown Film and Television School in Johannesburg. She lives, and works in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Read more at her blog or on her facebook.

Alex Vigue wears armor of laughter made from steel tempered in really salty tears. He’s also chubby and cute. Hit him up on twitter!

Anne Gorrick wonders “What do Situationists wear?” and “Are mermaids funny or evil or brittle?” You can find out more about her most recent books here and here.

Charles O'Hay is the author of two collections—Far from Luck and Smoking in Elevators—both available from Lucky Bat Books.

Cindy Rinne creates art and writes in San Bernardino, CA. This poem came from morning conversations at a coffee shop, including the unicorn.

Find more of her work at her website.

Dan Sklar has been trying to quit writing since he started in 1969. “It’s just one of those things,” was the last thing he heard his mother say.

His latest book, Flying Cats, Actually Swooping was published by Ibbetson Street Press.

Dion Farquhar is an exploited adjunct at two universities but still loves the classroom. A NYC transplant, she still misses friends and family back east, off-of Broadway theatre, and live baroque.

Find her second book Wonderful Terrible at Main Street Rag Publishing and her second chapbook Snap at Crisis Chronicles Press.

Don Mager’s second year of his retirement worked on 350 poems called Present Tense. Each syllabic sonnet snapshots the brief presentness of his yard and woods.

Four of them are here.

Doug Mathewson writes short fiction and also works a photographer. Now and then he is mistaken for a poet.

You can find more of his work here.

Emily Abendroth’s pieces are excerpted from her book, Exclosures, available here. Her newest book, The Instead (a collaboration w/ Miranda Mellis), was just released here.

Emily W. Recchia is an emerging poet concerned with the moon, authenticity, and breaking the rules. She will begin her MFA in Creative Writing next fall.

You can read more of Ms. Recchia’s writing here and here.

Francis Fern has been writing since he was tiny. Of nomadic elements, he’s been on passage for his kibbutz of desire, settling in communities throughout America, currently Seattle.

You can contact him here.

Jada Yee’s intent was to describe the awkward exchanges between passing strangers. For some, a simple greeting can feel like stepping onto a stage.

Jennifer MacBain-Stephens has recent work up at Queen Mob’s Teahouse, and decomP. She works for a mad scientist.

You can find her website here.
Jeremy Flick likes to get into shenanigans with his dog, Fenway, and perform music under the name Your Silent Modern War.

You can find out more at his website.

Jerrod E. Bohn’s work is scattered across many web and print journals. He teaches yoga in Fort Collins, CO when he isn’t out adventuring in the mountains.

Jerrod Schwarz has been published in The Fem, Apeiron Review, and others. He lives in humid Tampa where fending off all manner of alligators and swamp creatures is the norm.

Joannie Stangeland had the anatomical horse & never finished it but has completed some books + a pamphlet about technology slipping into the surreal.

You can find out more about those writings here.

John McKernan—who grew up in the middle of Omaha Nebraska in the middle of the USA—is now a retired comma herder / phonics coach after teaching many years at Marshall University.

His most recent book is a selected poems Resurrection of the Dust.

Work by California native/Georgia resident Jon Morgan Davies has appeared in JMWW and the Pedestal. Read more at his website.

Joseph Buckley lives, works, and studies in New Orleans. He dm’s celebrities in his free time and is awaiting his acceptance into the Kardashian family.

Lauren Page is a first year veterinary student living in the Appalachian Mountains with her orange tabby cat, Chicken.

Follow her on Twitter.

Magdalene Fry has walked to get from here to there in a lot of places, most end up reminding her of West Virginia, where she grew up and lived for a while, this one did too.

Ng Chun Lung, Daniel, is an English Literature senior at Hong Kong Baptist University. Being inspired by various poets, he believes in the power of poetry to heal this chaotic world.

Owen Oxley Hamill is a student in the M.F.A. program at Rosemont College. His fiction has previously appeared in Philadelphia Stories.

Paisley Kauffmann writes from Minneapolis with one of her two pugs in her lap. Her husband graciously provides free editing. She is honored to be in The Birds We Piled Loosely!

Peter Clarke is a writer native to Port Angeles, Washington currently living in Oakland, California.

Check out more at his website.

Ray Gonzalez was awarded a 2015 Con Tinta Lifetime Achievement Award in Latino Literature and a 2002 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Southwest Border Regional Library Association.

His latest books are Cool Auditor: Prose Poems and Beautiful Wall.

Robert F. Gross is a confirmed old queer bachelor with anarchist leanings (and likely to remain so). He has no pets.

Robert Ronnow’s most recent poetry collections are New & Selected Poems: 1975-2005 and Communicating the Bird. Visit his website to read more.

Roy Dorman has been a voracious reader for over 60 years. At the prompting of an old high school friend, himself a retired English teacher, Roy is now a voracious writer.
A resident of NY, **Stephen Mead** is a published artist, writer, maker of short-collage films and sound-collage downloads.

Check out his work [here](#) and [here](#).

**Serena Chopra** is the author of *This Human* (Coconut Books, 2013) and *Ic* (Horse Less Press, 2016). She is a PhD (ABD) at the University of Denver.

**Shawnie Hamer** is a poet from Bakersfield, California. She is currently a MFA candidate at The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics in Boulder, Colorado.

**T. Francis Curran** is a freelance writer from Pleasantville, NY.

**Tim Kahl** sleeps with dogs and models his attention span after rats. He sings lieder and collects puppets. His latest book is *The String of Islands* from Dink Press.

**Tom Darin Liskey** spent nearly a decade working as a journalist in Venezuela, Argentina and Brazil. He is the author of the stories in novella, *This Side of The River*.

**Tom McLaughlin** lives in a tiny attic space in Madrid, where he teaches and runs Scribble poetry workshop. He likes to ride his bike every day and swim in the sea whenever possible.

**Toti O’Brien** is the Italian accordionist with the Irish last name. She has been an acrobat and an anorexic with equal success: “Her Kind” taps into both domains of her past experience.

More about her can be found at her website.

**Tristan Lipe** degreed at Lawrence U and IL State U where he became a making enthusiast. He exists in Oak Park, IL on roof, pitch or page. Make more.

**ARTISTS**

**Brad Garber** writes and runs around naked in the Great Northwest. He has published poetry, art, photos, essays and articles in many quality publications. 2013 Pushcart Prize nominee.

**Karena Ness** is an avid birder though not in the traditional sense. Her birds land unintentionally within layers of paint, entail no formal classification, yet offer a sense of identity within the abstract spaces they inhabit.

Find more of Karena Ness’ work [here](#).

**Madison Luetge** is an up and coming artist based out of Texas. Her work is primarily two-dimensional figurative portraiture exploring themes of anxiety, identity and both social and personal relations.

More work can be found at her website.

**Michael St.Germain** is wary of logic in art. His studio practice alternates between controlled accidents and burying the past. Like a happy-go-lucky fool, he goes wherever his intuition leads.

**Samantha Hardcastle** is an oil painter and writer living in Dallas, Texas that is pursuing her MFA in Writing from Lindenwood University. The majority of her artwork expresses the intent to uplift women in their struggles.

More of her artwork and poetry can be found at her blog.

**Tom Darin Liskey’s** photographs have been published in *Hobo Camp Review, Roadside Fiction, Blue Hour Magazine, Synesthesia Literary Journal* and *Midwestern Gothic*.

**Vance Osterhout** makes photographs look the way memories feel, and writes the way your thoughts sound before your tongue strangles them.

Find more of his work [here](#) and on his [tumblr](#).
W. Jack Savage is a retired broadcaster and educator. Worldwide Jack has published more than 50 short stories and over 400 of his paintings and drawings. Jack and his wife Kathy live in Monrovia, California.

His latest book is *Imagination: The Art of W. Jack Savage*, more work can be found on his website.

Yari Ostovany’s work is process based and improvisational, a personal journey of exploration through the alchemy of paint, color, light, texture and the poetics of space.