

Vol. Two

Spring 2021

The Vital Sparks \triangle^*





Editor's Note

An examination of patterns, structures, systems — both natural and devised — that compose this existence.

A rejection of categorization and genre as a product of these stagnant institutions. Genre is but the casket Art has been buried in, filed away among the canon and catalog.

Liberation through Art.

— The Vital Sparks

Words

Jennifer Schneider

*As Day Becomes Night
and Night Becomes Day
and I Struggle To Fill In
The Blanks For Questions
Of Why We Do What We Do,
I Find Solace In Silence and
Answers In The Air Between
Myself and I*

61

Jude Whiley-Morton

To Be Read Forever

69



Wiebke Mertens *Cutting Hair* oil on canvas 145x110 cm / 57x43 inch 2020

Zoë Luh

Recipe After Ocean Vuong

“The most useful thing you can do with empty hands is hold on”. And I take comfort in tongue: garlic to keep memories away, blackberries to bring me to late spring. I take comfort in food and holding hands at dinner. I take comfort in recipes and knowing we don’t need recipes to shape care, but looking at the ingredients list anyways.

Eggy-bake (Pannukaku)

- Eggs
- Flour
- Sugar
- Salt

Instructions:

1. whisk ingredients together in a mid-sized bowl the night before
2. Get up early to put in the oven. It will be ready when everyone wakes up, like childhood mornings waking up to the sweet smell and singing
3. Shake powdered sugar over the top. Let the sugar cloud clear. Laugh as Joy (still) sticks out her tongue to catch the falling snow

Scallion Pancakes

- Flour
- Bacon
- Scallions
- Boiling water
- Salt

Instructions:

1. Cook the bacon. Remember when you were 10 and Niang-niang said you were too young to be cooking bacon because of the flying grease.
2. Pat off the grease with paper towels.
3. Crumble
4. Slice scallions into thin wheels, stacked together they look like dominoes ready to follow each other even as they fall
5. Wonder at the implications between “scallion” and “green onion”
6. Mix together the flour and salt. Pour in the water. Take a breath and begin to fold the dough. Try to not burn your hands. There are worse ways to be burned than by dough, but it still isn’t preferable.
7. Seal dough in a Ziplock bag and let it grow
8. Wait

9. Fold the bacon bits and scallions into the dough. Cut the dough ball into eight slices. Roll each slice into a ball. Use your palms to flatten into a circle. The best food is made with the palms, made with the love, the pressure of shaping something to eat, to nourish, to grow.
10. Fry in the pan with bacon grease (bacon makes everything better)
11. Serve with plum sauce and memory

Pork and Chestnuts

Serves: 5

- Pork ribs
- Chestnuts
- Ginger
- Scallions
- Soy sauce
- Sherry
- Brown sugar

Instructions:

1. Chop all ingredients. Curl fingers while chopping, like Dad always shows you. Add ingredients to the pot and fill with water until all ingredients are covered
2. Bring to a boil
3. Lower the flame, bringing the pot to a simmer. Wait.
4. While you're waiting, play a game of solitaire or work on hand-stitching your apron. Think about patience and how the hours spent over heat softens the meat until it falls off the bone, crumbling. Think about how, we too, fall away under warmth and time. Think about how we are sweetest when we come undone; soften. Think about how we are flesh, so we are life. Think about how we are life and we give life every day, every time we cook, every time we are patient, every time we are warm.
5. Like all the best things, serve with rice and chopsticks with the tips pointing away

Beans and Rice

Serves: hunger

- Black beans
- Tomatoes
- Onion
- Bay leaves
- Cumin
- Salt
- Pepper

Ingredients:

1. Search the cabinet for the dinner-saver: black beans
2. Pour the beans into a pan
3. Add cubed tomatoes
4. Slice onion. Try not to cry. Or if you do, then let the tears count for something. Let them fall
5. Add bay leaves, cumin, salt, and pepper until the kitchen smells like 6:30 on a Thursday.
6. Think about how some of the best things are made quickly, made from leftover items. Think about how we create love between our hands, and hold them up to our mouths to drink. Think about how when there feels like there's little left, we have our fingers and we have our palms. Think about how we hold on with empty hands. How we hold on to each other, so our hands must not be completely empty, unless what we're saying is that we are nothing, or we are illusion, or, like everything, we too are fleeting. Think about why we hold on anyways, even when our hands are empty. Wonder if our hands are ever really empty when we have each other, when we have our hands, when we have our palms, so we have love, so we have life.
7. Like all the best things, serve with rice and impermanence

Thai Larb

Serves: mourning

- Thai sticky rice, browned and ground into flour
- Minced pork
- Chili flakes
- A pinch of sugar
- Fish sauce
- Limes
- Shallots
- Culantro, an herb also known as Coriander
- Scallions
- Fresh mint

Instructions:

1. Toast sticky rice over low heat. When it begins to smell like popcorn, ground it with your mortar and pestle until it is a fine powder
2. Fry the pork. Add toasted rice powder and chili flakes. Remember how Jovi always told me to eat more spice. Remember how you learned that the Thai definition of spicy is different than Chinese. Remember how you learned to ask for mild spice.
3. Add sugar, fish sauce, and limes. Stir seasonings into the pork. Every part must be flavored
4. Slice the shallots and mince the scallions and culantro. Stir into saucepan with pork. Think about the first time you ate larb, sitting on the stool in his kitchen while he made Thai tea. Try not to think about the last time you had larb, sitting at your kitchen counter the night he died. Think about how this dish will always taste like

red peppers and laughter. Will always taste of limes and tears. Wonder at how such sadness and joy can exist in one mouthful.

5. Garnish with mint leaves and serve with bittersweet memory and love.

Zoë and Mikaela's Pasta

Serves: friendship

- Pasta
- Garlic (crushed)
- Artichoke hearts
- Kalamata olives
- Spinach
- Crushed red pepper
- Salt and pepper
- Butter

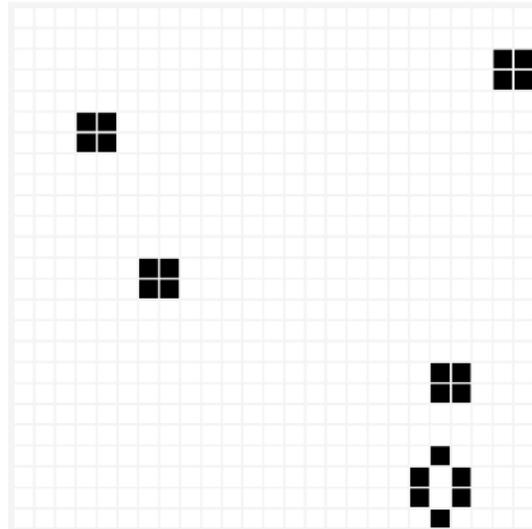
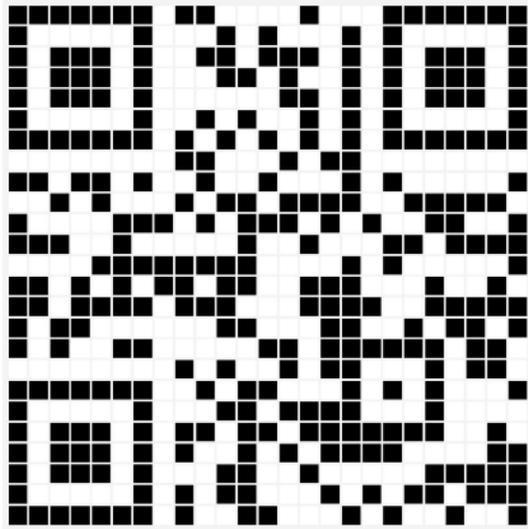
Instructions:

1. Fill pot with water and bring to a rolling boil. Add pasta.
2. Crush the garlic as you dance to Rico Nasty's "Fashion Week". Let the smell of garlic pull you back to Tuesday afternoons in September, cooking with the windows open and music mixing with smoke.
3. Wash the spinach and open the jar of hearts (artichoke)
4. Drain the pasta and rinse with cool water. If you don't quiet the heat, the noodles can't let go, stick together like rubber boots in mud.
5. Cook the garlic, spinach, artichoke hearts, and olives in lots of butter (goat butter, because we're all lactose intolerant). Laugh as Mikaela eats butter off the knife; remember Shiho doing the same thing years ago. Laugh as the years and lives collide, laugh at how completely different people could love the same things
6. Add pasta to the skillet and use spices to taste. Serve with laughter and lactaid pills. Remember how Ri-an always carries lactaid. Hands them out like candy at community meals, cause we all know Asian bitches can't do lactose, but we'll eat it all the same. Think about how you don't talk to Ri-an other than at meal times. Wonder at how such a small thing can bring us all together.

I take comfort in tongue, and the laughter rolling off ours. I take comfort in dancing as we spice the rice and lentils. In knowing community and the soft feeling of making a pie together, our hands all shaping slices of apple. I take comfort in words of comfort on hard days, and hands holding each other strong. Take comfort in knowing all the things we can do with our hands, and what we hold onto; how we hold on. Take comfort in crafting love with our fingers, and knowing that when there's little left, we have our fingers and food. I take comfort in knowing that even as I feel lost, I can call this home.

Joseph Alexander Brown

For Christian Bök (to grow you need to have a larger system)



(After 48 Generations.)

LENNA in Times

The Lenna image is perhaps one of the most famous and controversial images in data processing. Scanned from a Centerfold image of model Lena Söderberg in the November 1972 issue of Playboy in order to give a 512 by 512 pixel image. It has been debated from both the position of the misogyny of computer science, the role of consent in images. Lena Söderberg is pleased to have her image now used beyond the original intent – however Playboy was not pleased with its use originally from a position of copyright.

The image is constructed from Times New Roman font as a concrete poetry produced using a programmed hillclimber algorithm – an approximation of an image stolen and corrupted from the intent. The role of the author is lacking – the poem has so many layers of expression upon it that is hard to see who the author is, a question left to the readers.



Tuhin Bhowal

Sound Sonnet *

*"I thought that if I could put it all down, that would be one way.
And next the thought came to me that to leave all out would be another, and truer, way."
—John Ashbery*

Veer contains niched sign—you're hot as hoped
Darling die, organ-apple reefed in Aber
Sign torso glued-knock why in candle labour
In them sign showing? Noor, your rock-zest robbed

Sikh halt and glanced songs contain niched their bug
There, breast dick-blended, and in licence dry hen
Their London contact niched in *La Chain* gay hen
Zoo gone midday die—die zoo-gone truck

Songs stunned dies your
Stein and stealth and cruise
Under their sultan dirty gem stars
And film-art niched, so why robbed-ear fell

And brash niched Oz Allen signing ranting,
Oz, why eastern: then the east-kind-stellar
Die ditch niched sight do must die in Laban, and then?

**John Ashbery, as a teacher, used Rilke's "Archaic Torso of Apollo" for a translation exercise. Students sounded out the German words writing down English words resembling those sounds, for instance "sich hält und glänzt" was interpreted as "sick halt and glance" commonly. The exercise relied less on meaning and subject and more on sound and rhythm, despite the final version sounding silly. As the original exercise, Rilke's sonnet has been phonetically translated into English, but minor adjustments like punctuation have been introduced in this version.*

Essentials to Keep Pretending We are Not Temporary

(Bangalore 2018-20, for S.)

“The dark examines us / By touch alone.”

—John Berger

Returning to my room
on a BMTC bus

I figure the world is indeed run by a shoestring
books left to read
women’s laughter
constructs of psychoanalysis
mother’s recipes of fish
the BJP
& all the things I could do to your hair

As I stumble through the remains of each night
from the stop
I keep appending to a list I am never tired waiting for
a post as a translator
next weekend with its Friday off
nihilism
a lover her small hands red eyes
my new hoodie which intensifies the cold
old writing diaries

But before I undress
disappearing into bed like a verminous bug
I forget to check what I’d need the next day
my notes on Kafka
poems by Berger, Ruefle, my Ramanujan
just enough reams of sheets & a ruler
seeds for birds, biscuits for the dogs
pencils restaurant bills
dried petals of flowers from an other world

—this necessary clarity of our mutual puzzle.

Asya Wilson

Congratulations

“Congratulations!”
shouts a blurry face
across the street,
two kids bicycling behind,
“for the new baby brother!”
What?
“That’s so exciting!”
Baby sister lets go of my hand,
waves.
Cold air slips through my fingers.
“What’s that person talking about?”
“Oh, well, you don’t know yet.”
What?
“About the baby
in my Mommy’s belly.”
What?
A blotchy orange leaf crunches
underneath my foot;
wasn’t it just summer?
A car speeds by,
then another,
then another,
then another,
and I wonder
if baby sister
would be able to get back home from here.



Marc Springhetti *Untitled (wrestling with Bartoletti)* pen and ink on archival paper 420 x 594mm 2020

[adjustment protocol]

white socks / branded / clean shoes
the normal affluent
in language fitting, evanesced
and smooth of legs to leave
the foreground

the playground
uniform density
for sex appeal
ask the boys how to spell [laughs] “orange”, suck it in
or chase and kiss
and seek submit

to form as pitch
to pitch for status practice, emulate
an extraordinary thrum repeating

there is a loudness
to middling – heterosexual, unbending
meticulous muster of fashion
twist and force, knock and lick
consistently into shape

[I fail
quietly]

[and the girls
do not visit
my house]

┌───┐┌┐_ (ツ) _ / | *STRIKE* | | _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ

┌───┐|| THIS || IS || WHY || _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ
 ┌───┐|| LIVE || LONG || ENOUGH || _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ
 ┌───┐|| USE || LESS || PAPER || _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ
 ┌───┐|| THIS || IS || WHY || _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ
 ┌───┐|| EARTH || WILL || SURVIVE || _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ
 ┌───┐|| FOSSILS || LIKE || FOSSILS || _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ
 ┌───┐|| A || COOLER || DEATH || _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ
 ┌───┐|| THIS || IS || WHEN || _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ
 ┌───┐|| HOT || GIRL || SUMMER || _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ
 ┌───┐|| ACT || LIKE || IT || _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ
 ┌───┐|| STOP || MAKING || EXCUSES || _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ
 ┌───┐|| MAKE || EARTH || GREAT || _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ
 ┌───┐|| DENIAL || IS || NOT || _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ
 ┌───┐|| MY || IMAGINARY || BOYFRIEND | _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ
 ┌───┐|| DENIAL || IS || NOT || _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ
 ┌───┐|| HOT || IN || HERE || _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ
 ┌───┐|| DENIAL || IS || WHAT || _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ
 ┌───┐|| LEADS || TO || HELL || _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ
 ┌───┐|| THIS || IS || FINE || _____ | (\ _ /) || (•ス•) || / づ

Glenn Bach

from: *Atlas*

Story (the summer commuting the air into a walking
music. A true place) after story

who fears the prominence. *Ocean and
of the city* known to collapse —commons

ground. Where an accessible narrative the borders
are not strictly defined —where are the edges

against the rising sea) *Ocean and Alamitos*
how many lanes do you need spidery cracks within

(*great ideas in there somewhere*. The waves
on the west and the explanation of their effects

a history in ink. A **replica** of this city
—the edges are where

witness trees blazed and marked. With intonation
of the wild within its boundaries.

Plans for next season at
(Special Correspondence.)

--During the past'
| rectors of
the American company;
officers
and stockholders of -- 'i'*an
Beet Sugar
i and
has brought out! a few
plans of great importance

for the farmers of
the district
which is the best the factory
has ever had

in order get through the
rains, if possible
A large crowd was in
and the Oxnard band enlivened
the affair

wants the State highway. The
question is
or Whether it shall follow the old Conejo
road

the largest group
started over the Santa Ynez mountains
were blessed by Father James
the longest to be staged

*why this text may
contain mistakes why this
truth may never be.*

down to each canyon creek and
watershed how many stories
can be told about the history

*of this place of the paint
peeling and the potted plants
drying in La Nina's glare*

*an orange tree with a single fruit
remaining faint wind (no smoke
) in the California fan palm and
deodar cedars*

circles around

other circles reverb-
erating through the soil &
bed-
rock.

99,428 acres, 15%

fresh air is more valuable than money
right now this has been too close for
comfort the time for climate that's a bit
over 155 square miles has run through
dystopia is real now Mt. Wilson survives
to see another glorious day

103,135 acres, 15%

let's try this again the parrots have
returned the destruction wrought if
only this airshow didn't involve
people's lives I'd call it a success
that link takes you to somewhere
in California

small flare ups are to be expected
that wasn't there an hour ago the most
(new) normal Sunday in weeks two
heads of the monster

105,345 acres, 15%

a sight to behold after another
wild and woolly night sunrise
in Juniper Hills exhausting
my reserves of profanities
when will this wretched cuss
die I see today we're playing
the is it smoke or is it marine
layer game is smoky again wtf
had no idea how fast it would
come here hit us like a freight
train the lengths you are all
Herculean you want a good look
at fire get used to it because
hell's waiting people who pull
that shit



b chehayeb

diet rootbeer for the drive home

2020

Anna Zweede

Lockdown Imprints

“We do language.”

The branch of a geranium plant, snapped off from some flowerbox a few storeys above the street, lay in the gutter. Its flamboyant fuchsia pompom bloom hadn't yet realized the extent of the problem and continued exuding scent as if it were still attached to the rest of its vegetal self. Still jaunty at the window. Still rooted.

“Better go back to one a day for three-four weeks, and we'll see how you're doing then.”

Heavy military helicopters regularly drone from one edge of the sky to the other. They are clumsy, improbable conveyances. Then again, improbability is rife these days.

“...push the reset button...”

Maundy is derived from the Latin word for mandate. It carries the sound of water in a basin; it feels like the roughness of a towel. Towels are absorbent. Mandates are not. He did language, and He did silence, too. People paid more attention to the language – to their interpretation of the Word – than to the silence.

Certain silences are so absorbent that things vanish into them.

“While it was still dark,... thinking it was the gardener...”

A thundered warning before the unpredicted shower. Drops sounding like hailstones against the glass panes. They say water has memory. Remember. Remember me. Wash your hands often. Wear a mask. Leave the masks for those who really need them. Remember being a little girl and going out into the rain, tipping your head back, scrunching your eyes closed and sticking out your tongue. Don't chew the wafer, let it melt.

“Light is starting to shine.”

Hard cider fizzing into a tall, slender glass, lines of bubbles rising to the foam on the surface. The sun coming in through the kitchen window gives a sheen to the amber, polishes its beauty.

Salut, Sunlight!

“We just do not know.”

Repetitive newscasts. Human-interest stories, public health announcements, government officials here and elsewhere. How they’re doing it in that country. How this or that person is coping. The announcement of upcoming announcements, adjustments, curves, numbers. Better is not good enough. The threat still lurks, and will continue to do so for...

“View from my Window”

Something has been shattered beyond repair. Living into the brokenness is incredibly daunting. We cannot do it without each other. Perhaps, even together, the acres of raw grief will be too vast.

“It’s karma.”

Sea-glass. No, none of that in the house. Raffia, translucent colored paper, scissors. And thread for making Brazilian bracelets, last handled by a pre-teen who now has children of her own. One of whom is deep into coloring with felt-tips at the moment. In his coloring book. On his mother’s toe. On his own arms.

“Compassion”

It has all been said before; it must all be ceaselessly repeated. Much is wrong. Much is right. All truth that ever was, no heavier than a single creature’s final sigh. Infinite promise and possibility in one blade of grass poking up through the soil.

“Well, you know. Same difference.”

The suburbs. Then, of a medium-sized Midwest city. Now, of a world-famous capital. Parks, playgrounds with swings, sidewalks. Trees. Sandwiches at lunchtime and tv in the evening. Sewing machines.

“Ping.”

A video. Or a text message. Maybe a voicemail. Distraction from monotony and distracting from work that needs doing. A sign of life. A lifeline.

Some of the roses are beautifully scented. The freesias were too. That was an accomplishment, a tangible success and cause for celebration. The future, too, will include flowers.

“Delivery of the package has been delayed.”

“Live in the moment.”

Prepare to go out. Cap, sunglasses, mask, gloves.

Go, keep six feet in mind, to monitor the distance in between.

Come back.

Take off the accessories. Wash hands, keeping track of 20 seconds.

“It’s all good.”

Clap for frontline workers. Reach out to single friends, sing, exercise. Good wins.

Really?

Belligerent. Looking for a fight. Raw from being alone. Explosive from being sequestered.

“We’re building a plane in midair.”

So many wishes blowing around. They float and whirl and dance, just like always. Thicker, even. Bumping up against each other. Just as impossible to catch and hold as a shooting star or a double rainbow. Haven’t been any of those, though.

So many resources available. For free! It would take a lifetime just to scratch the surface. How fortunate, how enticing! Plenty to nurture the visionary and encourage the seeker. Platforms, webinars, comments; templates, paradigms, lateral thinking. The scramble for answers - or at least a few solutions - powers on.

“Whenever you find what you’re supposed to be doing in life, it kind of consumes you, it becomes your life’s work: your life’s work becomes your life. I discovered my life’s work early on. The more I poured myself into that, the less I cared what was going on externally.”

A season has turned, and turned again. All that is left now is the tiny flame of a tea-light.

“In this meanwhile, wrap your heart around the bruised and broken.”

That means everyone.

“We have creative agency.”

Words. Chiseled into stone. Inked on flesh. Etched glass, graffed concrete, marked wet sand on a beach. Recited, or intertwined with music and sung. Whispered, shouted, wailed, proclaimed. In the endemic language, in an unknown tongue, in the lunatic’s secret code.

V.S. Rakenduvadhana

Sahasra or the consequentiality of ambidextrous digits

Arbitrariness sees its chimera in Mathematicality, that morning (and perhaps, every morning).

It sits down to see its chirality, in Mathematicality.

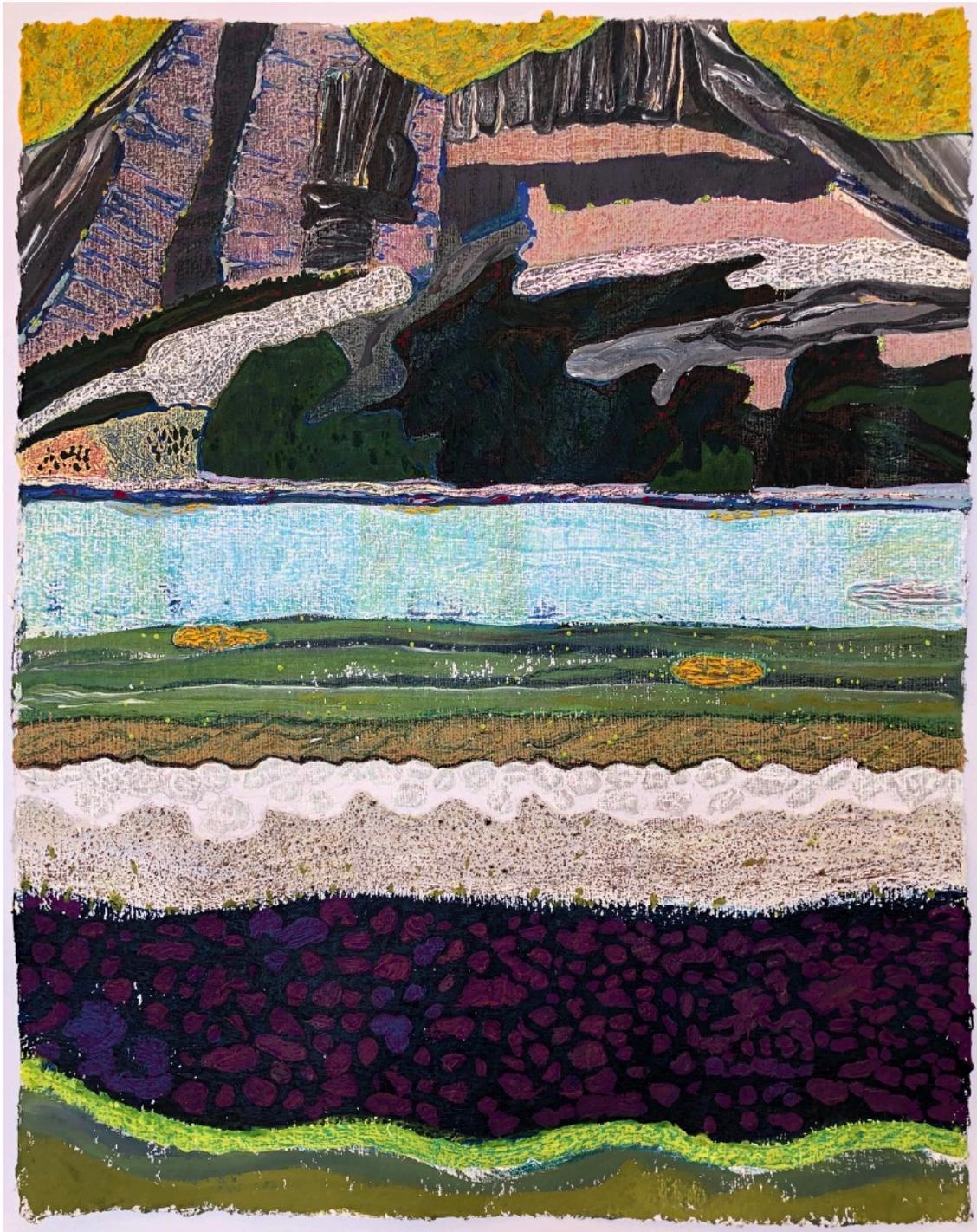
I have grown to be a gravid cloud,
With a thousand unread poems in my diaphragm,
And with an unuttered paresthesia of visceral verse.
The thousand unwritten poems, unread poems and unseen melody,
Seated within this vaporous gravidity;
With gravity,
Watch the scribbles and sigils that somersault before my moving digits;
Till they settle into the inertia of my Poesy,
Basking in that singular, sidereal warmth of chosen-ness.

In my morning ablution I contemplate,
Of the thousand roads I have taken, of the thousand roads I have not,
And those I will (have and have not), in the time to come.
The cities I walked, curl tightly;
And tighter so,
Within the cupola of my cranium.
The cities I have not set ears, feet and eyes on,
Tread like dexterous thespians on the brims of my dura mater.
Then time and again,
Falling ever so gently, like temple (tree) flowers;
Rise as the eventide lune.

Then I go on, to think of the name my mother gave me;
From the *Sahasra* (thousand) *nama* (names)
Of the thousand names I may have had, have had, will have.
And those I will not (have had, have)
Of the thousand Goddesses and Gods, that she chose.
The hours I spent writing and reading my name now shiver and burgeon,
Into the inscrutable suns and moons that I am,
Ra- of Egypt,
Raka- of Sanskrit,
Falling and rising with the breath of the child of Poesy,
Mothered by the thousand wombs – of novelty and habit.

The thousand men I wake to,
My love, and the thousand men (he is, has been, will be and will not be).
We take wing, as the thousand lotuses we offered;
Fragmenting into one,
And then one million infinitudes.
We oil and comb one hundred thousand hairs;
Then pluck and shave thousand others,
That bask in that singular, sidereal warmth of chosen-ness.
My thousand caresses swing in the backyard,
Holding hands,
With the thousand insults, which I offered to my love.
They run off to watch the sunset in our shrine of amnesia,
With a ten thousand others,
To bask in that singular, sidereal warmth of chosen-ness.

The thousand (or ten thousand) synapses
Of each of the hundred billion somas, (or eighty six)
And the everything they are, are not, will be and will not be;
Spatter and sibilate the function of the universe.
The macrocosms unfurl like fervent pearls;
Tugging histones that seethe and pull back at the cosmic beads.
The twenty thousand genes of who, what, when and where;
Of was, is and will be,
Draggle like *Ras* – suns, and *Rakas* – moons.
They draggle like Elysian orbs,
To bask in that singular warmth of chosen-ness.



Jon Joanis *Canadiana One* gouache and colored pencil 16" x 20" 2020

After Nirvana at the Black Market

Niche pastiche purgatory. Distaste
for words: abdomen, dementia...
landlord, caulk, deluge.

*If you breathe in deep enough you can supplant y
our gut with your fist.*

The boors among us bore gusts
rattlesinop
into the placid twee
who hadn't the sharp
to make equator, yet pins
—the pins uploaded to river men's eyelids
tedious pin heds....

O innocence!
O well-meaning! You look so old to me now.
the waste of a century,,,,,
you'll take care
I dare hope, thud a Tibet
breeze
boneless

)The continue(

kid's illustration of a sulking moon
soft under the bright
baffling rain
hills on this rain
baffled skyward
cone-shape
sh sh sha
dow
s



Wiebke Mertens *Watching Him While He Watches the Garden* oil on canvas 180cm x 150 cm 2020

Lydia Downey

After the Fall of Eagle Nebula's Creation

But he was God;

Those hands that reached out,

Obscured from dust and gas

Crooked, creaking fingers of his elephant trunks

Made me want to believe in his pillars of creations

Full of blue hues, eroded from electromagnetic radiation he's trapped,

Casted and ever glow of flushing magenta

And when tried to be grasped, yellow perforated the cracks

Cut my palms

Adagio, as it oozed oxidized brown, creating a serpent

Slithered down, as he destroyed and created the stars in a cycle

But he was natural;

Molecular hydrogen composed his body

too hot to touch,

Paralyzed by his beauty

I theorized his destruction:

It could be a shockwave, as I watched him spiral out of control

Suffocated on radiation, stoic as he stood

That these elephant trunks were the shaking of his fingertips

showed

Rusted red, flowing from thousand light years away

And the plasma that he's held together

Has not erupted from the childish supernova

And I watch,

Seizing to exist

Pillars of Creation is a photograph taken by the Hubble Space Telescope of elephant trunks of interstellar gas and dust in the Eagle Nebula, specifically the Serpens constellation, some 6,500–7,000 light years from Earth.

Sadie None

PLASTIC BAGGIES

Smarting through
shadowed rifts,
wink on orange:

I grooved better.
I burned outside churches

with rock star tits,
nose immaculately cocked

& we could only evince
in the shower.

I realized my gums
& sobbed & sobbed.
Paint garbed under my nails

while you took me from behind.

I asked for your knife
but you granted me
toilet paper,
& I gagged.

& I rubbed my face on the rug.
I was a hell of a dog,
bad girl,
I had to sleep outside,
scurrying between recurring lawn
& untapped fuel.

Silly muscles.
Lime green flecks spat me
up
when I was coming

down.

Joanne Grumet

etymology recapitulates ontogeny

when we were fish in the water

we were fish

were fish

fish

in the water

water

wa-wa

WAH

WAH



Fabienne Winkler

2020

Jason Ly

I See a Face

i see a face
a face
ef face
surf ace
i s
i t?
a
as set
a
face t
a faucet?
so
s acred
so
se cret
so concret e
a clo set
so clo se
so clo thes
sew clo sed
and loo se
an lo se
a lo ser
a long
no long er
so long er
a
s ong

Jessica Martin

I've Always Had Good Veins I told the Nurse

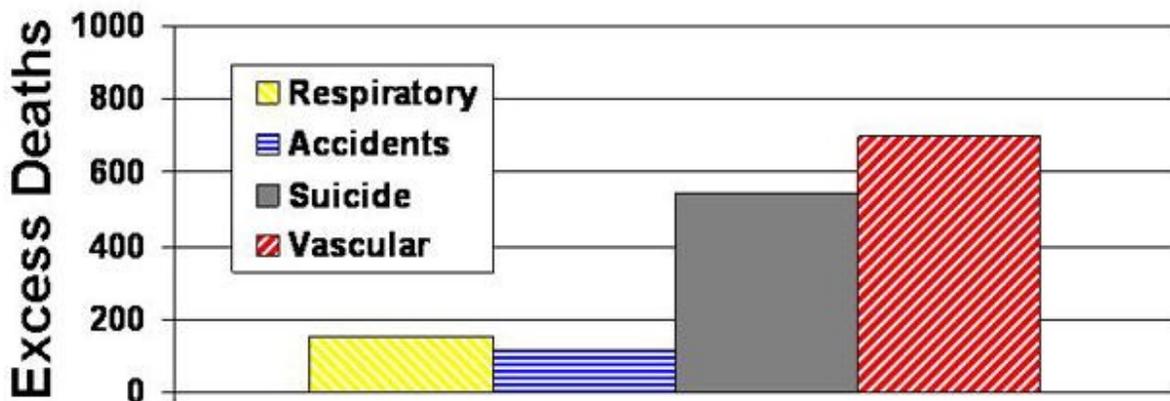
L'Oreal calls the make up I wear
Cover-Up because
guess what I want to do

I am a cautionary tale
I have a potentially life-
threatening disease
do I repeat myself

They denied me life
insurance because what I absorbed
is potentially fatal
and they can't insure someone
who might die

[Figure 1](#)

Vascular Disease is a Leading Cause of Excess Death in Bipolar Disorder



Excess deaths in bipolar disorder

This graph uses aggregate data from one of the largest studies of mortality in mood disorders to illustrate the primary causes of excess death with bipolar disorder (Osby et al. 2001). In their

sample, a total of 2,129 excess deaths were identified in those with bipolar disorder, 700 of which were attributable to vascular disease (592 cardiovascular, 108 cerebrovascular). Thus, nearly 1/3 of the excess deaths were attributable to vascular disease alone. The top four causes of excess deaths are illustrated in this figure. (From the National Institute of Health.)

But this white room tempts
the fates I am not
your starlit mom though
I can put you to bed
when you stagger and cry

I can buy your 750 mls and pretend
that I bought you lunch instead
I snap a picture of your license plate
In case you try to drive

I say you have to leave
you hide your hands behind your back

I've got eye liner too but it only livens my eyes
He said now you see what you've done
Neither of us will be going anywhere

Aminta Meheru

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Marije Bouduin

3 Sonnets

§

The process of poetic accretion exhibited by the taught elegance of the bowerbird:
The bowerbird that arranges feathers while the critic nods in lieu of deriving meaning.
The meaning of the bowerbird within poetry has been multiplied,
an arrangement, not even all that featherlike.

Let art plead its muteness,
the red bodies move as the brace of artistic expectations hardens around my neck.
As an allusion, the feathers should remain separated.
As a contribution, this is a one-dimensional facsimile
yet its framing remains remarkably devoid of celluloid:
the act of seminal photography

expressed by visual depictions of the linings of your hand
intended to be read from right to left.
But whenever I set out to capture the bending of a knee
I describe an entire political system.

§

The act of writing as a substitute for immediate gratification. All poets are exhibitionist
my father once said,
as he denounced poetry as a habit and wiped the surface clean.
A habit is only a way to describe an action of which its superseding potential is known.

So can a habit be made the subject of a poem? And if not, can the cleanly wiped surface be its
substitute?

Here then I emerge from below the surface and disappear.
Here then we presuppose the emergence as a given.

An emergence of poetry can be seen as great ostentation, but luckily,
we've been muttering it under our breath all this time.

They have consequently implemented a policy to save up on the breath used to hide words
under:

The efficiency of a soviet factory poet. On the next line,
I'm Mayakovsky's sternum refracted.

§

I am sleeping with economists and all they talk to me about is quantitative easing.

Nothing I do is with ease.

The ease traditionally escapes me. The economists I sleep with accuse me
of causing
the 2008 global financial crisis.

The presented simile paints a mouth as the imaginary boundary of property lines:
the act of foreclosure as a purely sexual exchange.

The derivative swap exemplified only by spitting in one's mouth.

I have the spit that was derivatively swapped and carry it in my throat

to lubricate the buzzwords expected.

My father is a sub-prime mortgage on which my mother routinely fails to complete the down-
payment on time.

The image of my parents would remain sub-prime, no matter the state of most global
economic affairs.

The global economy of rising divorce rates.

The way a blank check gets written, but someone left their pen at home.



Rusudan Khizanishvili *Underwater World* acrylic and mixed media on canvas 60 x 120 cm 2016

Christopher Porcaro

Intersection of Second and Necromancy

Most things throughout my day are secondhand

attempts to forget. I am existing
in the space where memories go when nothing's left
to catch the echo, and they escape.

Sleep replaying the concentric three-ring circus of day, only now
performed in scrambled airwave acrobatics: perennial high-wire act on a live-wire;
tac-toe ticks light footwork above. The reverse
martyrdom of my day on display

in vulgar psychodrama. Ruptured imitation.
An imposter made to replace a memory. A place

holder
for a more noble order, noon's ornate lens leaks
onto copper coated pennies. Change, reflecting half-life heat
from my car's ashtray. Shift to neutral. Then

first-things-first, the Second Coming's third try
puts us all into high-drive. Leaving the foreground, we forgive
our own trespasses and lead ourselves to temptation. We break
at an intersection.

Our cars keep crawling, colliding in loop. Forgetting with each return.

Now, most of my day is secondhand self-confession;

false floor under which my phantom is fastened. Inner gears turn fluid in drive.
In this field plowed for pecking, birds of prey circle my sky burial.
Scarecrow body made of PSE meat, mimicking the movements of men.
It sways back and forth with wind.
Contours traced in sympathetic ink pretend self-animation is cellular by design.

Designed then displayed four car crash
at the three-way intersection.
Reverberation through crushed axil and frame. Four
Kuman Thong wrapped in gold leaf receipts. Roasted
in the wreckage of our technology.

All things and days are secondhand.

Charlie Neer

Emergency Gender Admittance Form

EMERGENCY GENDER ADMITTANCE FORM

for once i'd like to go to the emergency room and not worry about

_____ a man/looking at _____ my nipple

poking through my hospital gown

why is it

___ that doctors depicted on *the resident* on fox

___ can diagnose a disease only one person has

___ ever had for a mysteriously ill patient

___ in a time slot of 30 minutes

but

___ every time i go into the ER

___ they immediately assume i'm having

___ womanly problems

aka

___ i just have my period

and

___ everything is centered around my period

and

___ the fact that i have one

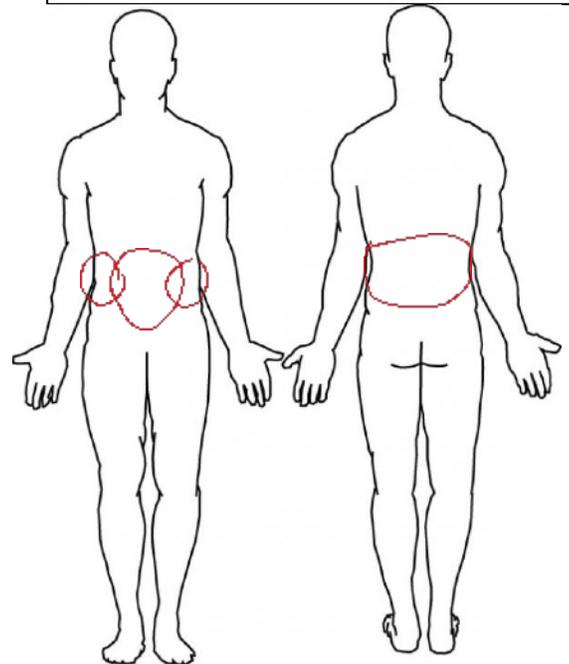
and a uterus

(7.5 x 3.3 x 3.7 cm, bent slightly backwards

last menstrual cycle relevant)

ovaries

Pain Location: Indicate pain sites on figures



(Right: 3.2 x 2.0 x 2.3 cm
Left: 2.5 x 1.3 x 1.3)

and

vagina

(patient described discomfort from probe,
tightness due to possible inflammation)

means that my body is only capable of

__womanly pains

there is no room for other pain with all of my

~~womanly parts~~ in the way what if

i came in with cis parts

penis

(7.5 x 3.3 x 3.7 cm, bent slightly
last ejaculation occurrence irrelevant)

testis

(Right: 3.2 x 2.0 x 2.3 cm
Left: 2.5 x 1.3 x 1.3 cm)

and a prostate

(patient described discomfort from probe,
tightness due to possible inflammation)

could they stop pinning pain on parts that are not producing problems

why is my body a yes or no checklist?

(is patient not well enough to understand the doctor's findings? _____)

translate,

(is patient transgender and thus incompetent? _____)

(if yes, explain gender here: _____

if yes, explain their genitalia prescriptions here: _____

if yes, explain they have a mental illness here: _____

if yes, explain how they are just confused here: _____)

answer the next questions to the best of your ability:

E(RAS)E(-D)U(S)

i. doing things i value

It is important to have fun

It is important to have healthy habits

I do things that are meaningful to me

I continue to have new interests

I do things that are valuable and helpful to others

I do things that give me a feeling of great pleasure

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thing that feel s

i have
to have habits
to

continue

feeling

ii. looking forward

I can handle it if I get unwell again

I can help myself become better

I have the desire to succeed

I have goals in life that I want to reach

i can handle

myself be
the s eed
o f want

can

i help myself be

desire d
have life that i want

iii. mastering my illness

I can identify the early warning signs of becoming unwell

I have my own plan for how to stay or become well

There are things that I can do that help me deal with unwanted symptoms

I know that there are mental health services that help me

Although my symptoms may get worse, I know I can handle it

My symptoms interfere less and less with my life

My symptoms seem to be a problem for shorter periods of time each time they occur

i he ar in signs

there are things i do with want

know there s help

though my hand

interfere s a

symptom o f time

the early becoming

my own plan to be

wanted

help

although i know i

interfere with my life

a problem each time

iv. connecting and belonging

I have people that I can count on

Even when I don't believe in myself, other people do

It is important to have a variety of friends

I have friends who have also experienced mental illness

can
my
variety of
experience s

count

even when i don't

have a v o i
ce



Edward Oviedo Agrupación deliberada n2 De la serie *ensambles* Lapiceros sobre papel de color
15cm x 12cm 2018

Is This Loss?

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Jennifer Schneider

As Day Becomes Night and Night Becomes Day and I Struggle To Fill In The Blanks For Questions Of Why We Do What We Do, I Find Solace In Silence and Answers In The Air Between Myself and I

Morning Routines

Sirens roar, alarms rings, and bodies turn – right, left, right again. Limbs stretch, bare soles meet cool wood. Muscle memory moves both body and soul from one room of four walls to the next. Chin up, they say, when I say *No*. Quiet now, they urge, when I say *No*. Truth emerges like dew as eyes meet eyes in the steamy washroom mirrors. Go ahead, tell me, what type of day awaits.

First thought, best thought.

Ready. Set. Go.

1. Something wet
2. Something dry
3. Something special
4. Something lost
5. Something old
6. Something new
7. What you see in the mirror
8. What you hear in your mind before sleep
9. First thoughts as eyes open each new day
10. Most prized personal trait
11. Item in your medicine cabinet
12. Something sweet
13. A favorite color
14. A favorite piece of clothing
15. Least favorite season
16. Synonym for strong
17. A fear
18. Item in your refrigerator

19. A reason to be hopeful
20. Something precious
21. Something comforting
22. Another word for touch
23. Another word for greet
24. Another word for hope
25. A favorite flavor or food
26. The most beautiful site in ~~the~~ your world
27. A sweet sound or something that makes you cry with joy

The day ahead may bring ___1___, ___2___,
even ___3___. Perhaps ___4___. If I'm
lucky, ___5___ might meet ___6___.
If I'm not, and even when it's ___15___,
and even when ___17___ sings and screams
in my eyes, ears, and soul, I think of
___12___, ___13___ blankets, and my ___14___.

Hello, ___8___. Good day, ___9___.
I am ___10___ and I am ___16___.

Made of ___7___, ___11___
and ___18___, too.
Most of all, I think of ___19___,
and ___20___. I think
of ___21___.

I count to four and inhale. Count

back as I exhale. Then lift
my chin and open my eyes, mouth,
and heart. ___23___ world. I know
not how to give in or give up. No
matter what might come, I still taste
___25___, still see ___26___, and
hear ___27___. Most of all,
I still believe
in ___24___.

Evening Reflections

Any thought a worthy thought.

Ready. Set. Go.

1. Eye color
2. Color of darkness
3. Another word for quiet
4. A body part (plural)
5. A good night greeting

Shoulders square and tighten
as ___1___ eyes
focus on hallway mirror. Shades
of ___2___ beneath lashes. Clock
hands tick as lifelines
___3___. Soft whispers float
overhead. The day's events
on repeat. ___4___ flick

switch as room darkens. _5_
world.

Personal Phone Books

Purchased yearly, as certain as the seasons. An eight by five spiral packed with numbers, names, and notes. Each marking a memory of life, love, and laughter. Now, in a year marked of loss and longing, I track, tally, and turn the page – always seeking a brighter tomorrow. Pencil scratches, pen marking, dreams turned visible. Once forever friends now strangers. I think of her and though I do not understand her, I wonder how she is.

1. The color of Fall
2. An ice cream flavor
3. A type of pie
4. A backyard bird (plural)
5. A classic movie
6. A breakfast food (plural)
7. A classic boardgame
8. A 2-player card game
9. Top three voting issues

Hello, operator. I need a number - for a friend. It's been awhile.

I misplaced her number and don't recall her address. Somewhere across town.

No more than a few miles but so far away. She likely lost mine, too.

Do you know her? She has eyes the color of __1__, prefers __2__

to __3__, and sings like __4__. We've shared babies, bruised

knees, and battered bodies. Tubs of custard, chocolate covered

raisins, and buttered popcorn, too. Only the flavoring artificial.

We've laughed through Friday night __5__, Saturday morning

__6__ and rainy afternoons of __7__. __8__ and Oujia

boards. Neither of us foresaw this future, though. I never did

like Sorry. Always preferred games of strategy to games of chance.

Hard boiled to scrambled eggs. Felt to floppy slippers. Life now

so random. Games of war everywhere. Unfair, too.

I apologize, Operator. I'm not usually nostalgic. Not naïve, either.

There are aisles, miles, and issues - ___9___ - between us.

But I miss her. Do you have her number? Thank you, friend.

Story Time

Question 1. When reflecting on one's life, what matters most?

1. The beginning
2. The ending
3. The length
4. The setting

Question 2. Which word is least like the others?

1. Life
2. Live
3. Story
4. Plot

Question 3. What word (only one) is missing from the following list?

1. Choice
2. Destiny
3. Voice
4. Being

Question 4. What is your preferred type of ending to a story?

1. Surprise
2. Unknown/Open
3. Predictable, even cliché
4. Sentimental, Tear-Jerker
5. Other

Question 5. Which is most dangerous?

1. An untold story
2. A silenced story
3. A false story

4. A true story

Question 6. Define Democracy

Question 7. Define Story

Question 8. How does democracy preserve story? How does story preserve democracy?

Question 9. How many letters are there in the word Story? In a story?

Question 10. Are there an odd or even number of letters in the word Democracy?

Question 11. Define Letter

Question 12. Write a letter to your future self. Say what you've longed for so long to share. Etch your epilogue in permanent ink, for your eyes alone. Watch your story thread its own magic and its own truths. Fill in the blanks and find your own truths. Complete the thoughts that have lingered for days, weeks, even years - always just below the surface. Silence the tendency towards silence. Celebrate the language that is your Life.

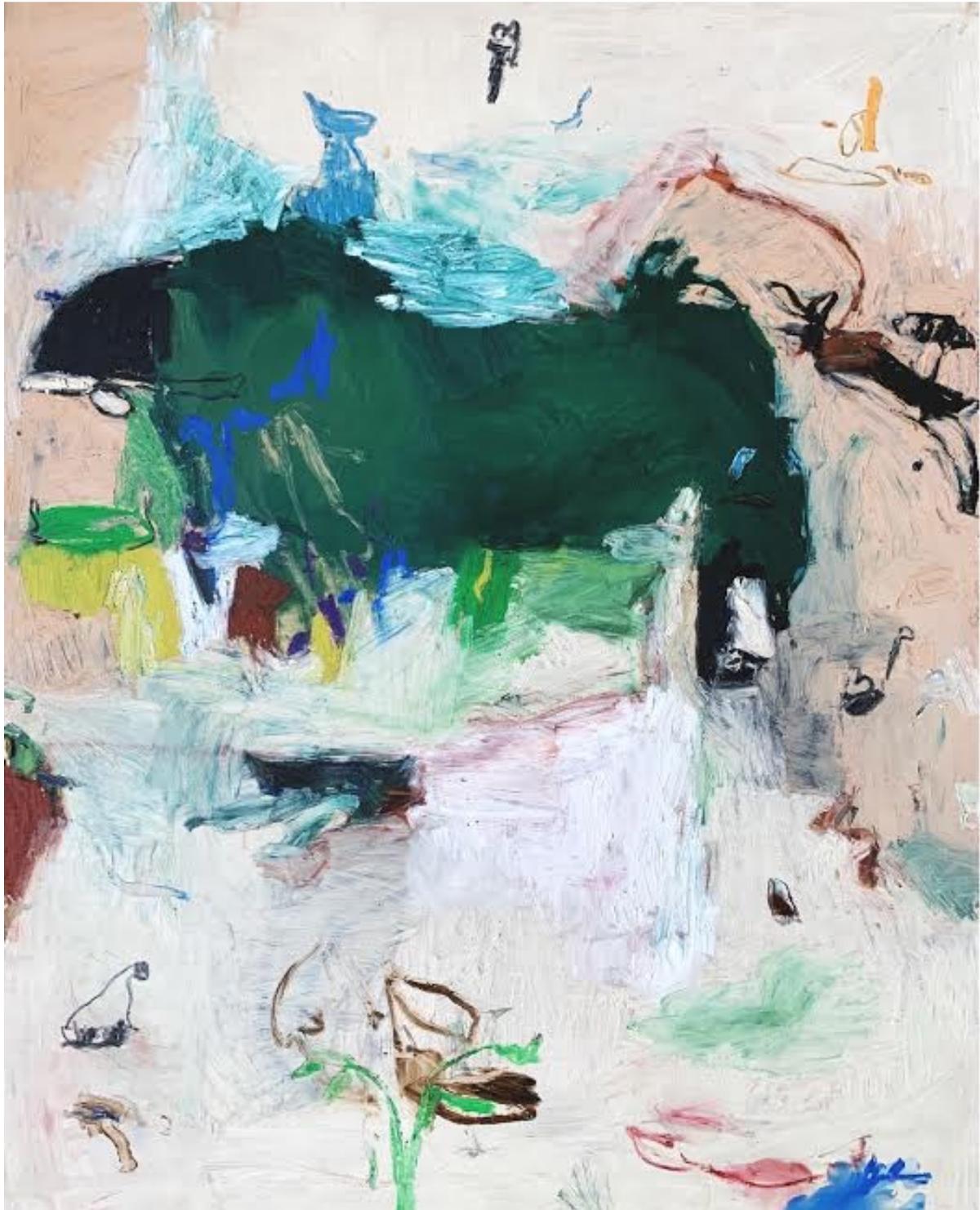
1. A beloved movie
2. Cherished book
3. Your most prized trait
4. Another word for love
5. Synonym for honey
6. A distraction
7. Something you do daily. A verb
8. Meaningful lyrics
9. Impactful author
10. Favorite dish/recipe
11. First job
12. Most recent job
13. Birth city/town

14. Names of three people who you've loved
15. Meaning of hope

A Letter to My Future Self

Dear _____

You know the ending, the one from __1__ __2__, too. Perfect, even if neither what you first imagined nor hoped for. Original, __3__, weighted of __4__, sticky with __5__. Go ahead. Weave then write your own ending. In ink, No. 2 Lead, and 12-point font. Put down the camera. Turn down the __6__. Silence the voices that linger as the clock hand pushes forward in the dark of the night. Turn the parchment that __7__ with the touch of time. When you reach the penultimate page, the last chapter of our current entry, your series, what does it say? Do you hear __8__? __9__, too. Does the air smell of __10__? A life of __11__ and __12__. Wrapped in __13__. Woven of __14__ __14__, and __14__. Put up your feet. Dreams of soles and souls clothed in __15__.



b chehayeb

too sad to start a garden

2020

Jude Whiley-Morton

To Be Read Forever

the beastly form of borrowed time upright
on crutches here and dying there, awakes
once deft, of dextrous mind, fallen from light
a balled fist knows nothing, goodwill nor pain
may penetrate to palm, pain hasn't the
blue guilt that pulls and knots, that blocks the vein
it's each angel inserting catheters
it's lapsing, losing mettle to awake
the second time: the moon pales at Heaven
the ants beneath its eyes begin to build
ladders, easily, urgent, lessen the
fall, as germs, gnawing rungs, sweep them into
the beastly form of borrowed time upright
on crutches there and dying there, awakes

