

Vol. One

Winter 2020

The Vital Sparks





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.

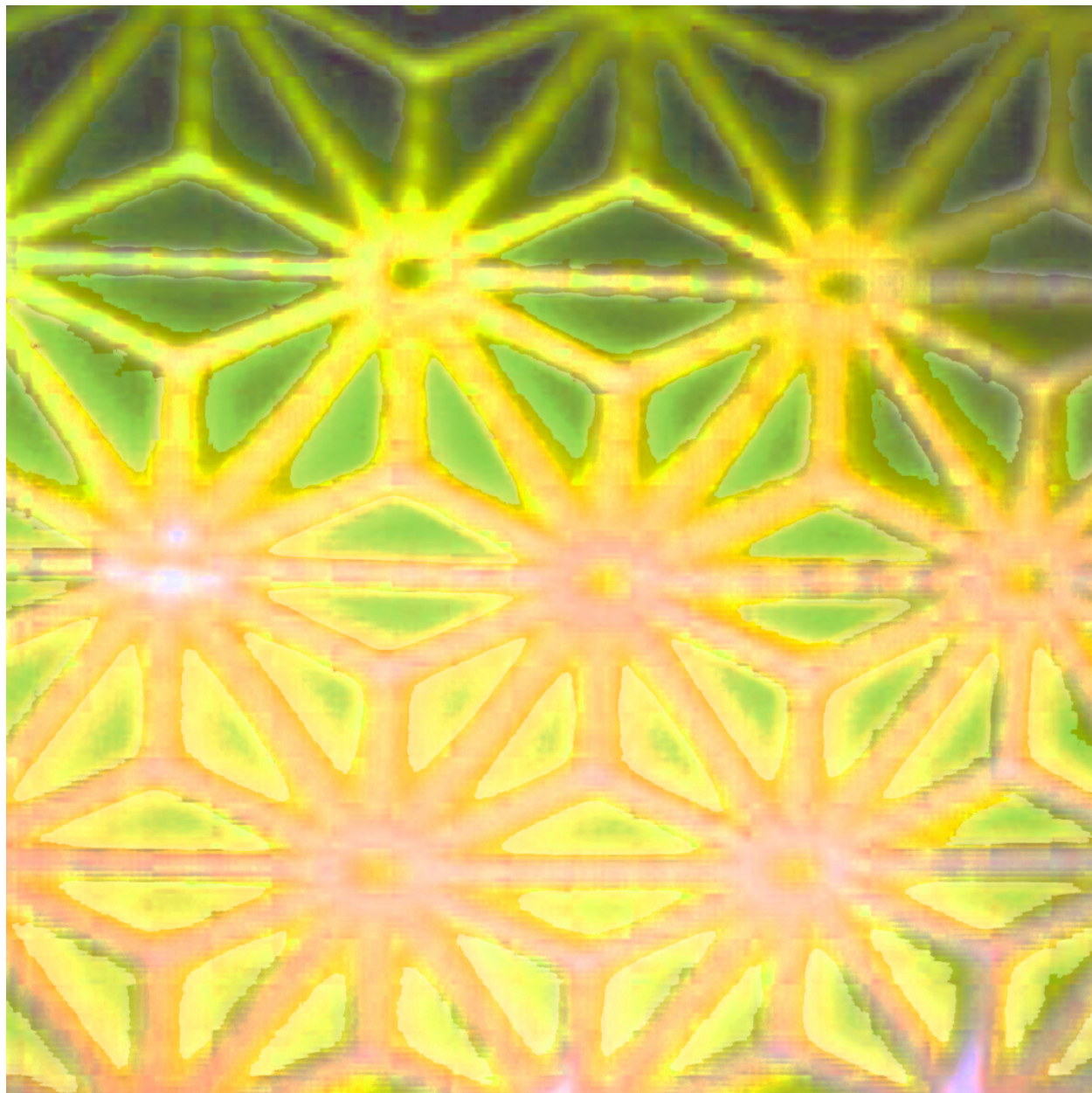
— The Vital Sparks

Contents

Gabriel Clark-Leach			Anna Idelevich		
<i>How Can a Poem End?</i>	2		<i>Was quiet on the moonlit path</i>	31	
Karen Downs-Barton			Giles Goodland		
<i>Kovva, Trin / Object, Three</i>	4		<i>Either</i>	32	
<i>Of My Romani History</i>	5		Shyla Shehan		
<i>Two Oranges</i>	6		<i>Still Life at Big Lake</i>	33	
Ralph Pennel			Radoslav Rochallyi		
<i>SCHERZO</i>	7		<i>So save me</i>	34	
Matthew Babcock			<i>Terrible</i>	35	
<i>Forms: V</i>	8		Julie Benesh		
Sonya Wohletz			<i>NOTES FROM THE NIGHT</i>		
<i>Particle Theory</i>	12		<i>(A BOOK SPINE STORY)</i>	36	
<i>They Staged a Pyramid Cast</i>	16		Kelly Chitwood		
Cole Pragides			<i>Breathe</i>	37	
<i>Villanelle for the</i>			Donald Guadagni		
<i>Performance Art of</i>			<i>Bird song</i>	41	
<i>Running Into an Ex</i>	17		Eric Delp		
James Grabill			<i>What Happened in Richfield</i>	42	
<i>Remains on the Rise</i>			Joshua Martin		
<i>of Seawater Sense</i>	18		<i>verbal manifestations</i>	44	
Lisa Brognano			<i>nothing out of nothing</i>		
<i>Bends, Binds, Loops,</i>			<i>yields the nowhere that condemns</i>	46	
<i>and Hitches</i>	23		Craig Finlay		
Priya Tamang			<i>Bird Bath</i>	49	
<i>Psychedelic</i>	26		Dorothy Lawrenson		
Cyrus Shafii			<i>Ouroboros</i>	50	
<i>Don't Bite Your Nails</i>	27		Wyeth Leslie		
Thomas Osatchoff			<i>passive_distractions</i>	51	
<i>STONE INTO TURN TO</i>	28		Jason Rodriguez		
<i>TO TURN INTO STONE</i>	29		<i>hue slants</i>	52	
Frank Weaver					
<i>6:11pm</i>	30				

Contents

Ai Jiang <i>STACCATO</i>	53	Pawel Grajnert <i>Screen Shots</i>	58
Stephen Guy Mallett <i>Gonflage</i>	54	Stephen Mead <i>Boundaries Breaking</i>	60
<i>Imbolc at Mænad Mt., ID</i>	55	Lana Perice <i>Learning</i>	61
Dave Shortt <i>Tin</i>	56		
	Contributors	63	



Gabriel Clark-Leach

How Can a Poem End?

as a parable of probabilities, the story of original sin
drops us between two folds of a map:
where Cain and Abel return from the crossroads,
to a crossroads: the universe and all that is, is one way
while its negation ceaselessly swells into blood drawn, living Lethe.
As one looks up into the sky, it echoes back, "I am blind and cannot see."

As choice, the determination of choices is what one can see.
To renounce this certainty, one's lineage of knowing, is paradoxical (impossible) sin.
Thought navigates its origins as a fish returning to die in Lethe.
Intuition solidifies a geography of returning for which there can be no map.
There is no departure from chance...but there is, in a way.
At the edge of lostness, one finds something that is not there: a crossroads.

All that is lies between the lines at the crossroads.
All figures unfold in shadows or flows along which the thinking eye can see.
Nervous rivers erode lines of thought, as wind, as sound, as hollow stages of the way.
Chaos exists, full and dense. A black pearl in sprawling fist. The point of original sin.
Chaos, a space eroding with each refolding of the map.
Chaos marks the returning Fall into Lethe.

But Beginning and not the End is marked off by Lethe.
For being is beginning at the crossroads
where first the traveler draws a map.
The ending of a season scrawls a rift returning for the mind to see
a space. A natural line connecting knowledge and sin.
Returning and not The End marks each instance of the way.

All stories are parables extending behind revelation. All stories point a way,
an unstitching of worlds, a needle threading Lethe
laying bare legions fast asleep, stitched into riftless sin,
a taught shrinking skin, dry in ceaseless sun, ripping open, exposing a crossroads
a feast of blood for creatures to taste, to crave, to smell and see.
All skin suffers repetition and inscribes in thought the recoiling shape of a map.

One can trace heavy steps mounting Golgotha without recourse to a map.
Golgotha, the skull: two voids unmapped leading the way
into shadow. One is always alone, where none can see.
There is a coolness always at one's feet. It is the soft increasing pull of Lethe
drawing its waters into a sheet of ice, black expanse, an unmarked crossroads,
a returning void that mocks the magnitude of sin.

Imagine that this poem has been your very life: its corruption, your sin. Its unfixed way,
an inborn map charting thought's return through Lethe.
Each line is changed. Each line returns. Alive, not forgotten, infecting all that you see.

Karen Downs-Barton

Kovva, Trin / Object, Three

A Sonnet for Kezia

De Waal reimagines the ephemeral
as a cold slip painted over gilt
his mark fired in porcelain

translucent as flayed skin

receiving containing silent psalms
in the Ateneo Vaneto there are words
etched in china walls pressed
bruised petals
in a *Library of Exile*

light passes or rests within

but of the Rom the wanderers the exiled the outsiders
walkers or riders through Nineveh Alexandria Aleppo
no bisque memorialises they have self-erased

in *pharrajimos* wordless fragmentation
the *marime* of bearing witness

Pharrajimos, 'the devouring', is the Romani term for the Romany holocaust.
Marime, the banishment or defilement for breaking sets of rules governing how the Roma live.

Of My Romani History

in the bubble of a crystal ball	a moment captured	the heart of a camp bereft of Roma	a chapel bell tolls	in <i>cherribim</i>
the past a betrayal	the <i>pharrajimos</i> the fragmentation	new literature reveals and reveals	we swim or sink in history	our language lost on knotted tongues
the salt taste of skin leachates	merges with soil walked on	floats to the air exhaled	of those who boded in woods, wove baskets	the fading identities
the seasonal life	this migration	overhead, birds form inverted V's	rivers travel meander	a changing landscape
there are legends how much is truth	while time romanticises, distance distances	this diaspora, community	the caravans and <i>atchin tans</i>	there was freedom, living on the edge

Cherribim, Angloromani for heaven.

Pharrajimos, Angloromani for the Romani holocaust, translates as fragmentation or devouring.

Atchin tan, stopping places for the Roma.

Two Oranges

i. Divvus : Morning

Left on the chopping board

The children leave for school
Noise along the foot path

The cat mews at the window
Like a baby and my breast ache

The crib by the bins
Speckled with rain

The webs sparkle droplets
Ruffled by a breeze

Then I see your message

A poem in biro on rind.

ii. Shuliki Pomander

Bruised fingers curl around a morning star,
Christmas scented. Palm cupped. Halting its roll
is a sentence paused, a conversation halted.
I hold stab pocked rind, again and again and a broken
tooth pick. A line of divots in rind.

Eyes wince in sprayed zest and the world
disappears for just a moment a moment
where anything might have happened
but

fleetingly. Earthy nubs of cloves needle palms
calyx shoulders breaking the surface of the oily pomander
inscribe your palm with O,
oh, spiced ozone. They are synchronised
held in time exploding from an orange.
Douse them in orris clouds roll
in cinnamon, hide the shuliki in a paper bag,
dark and warm in the airing cupboard.

Shuliki is Angloromani for orange.

Ralph Pennel

SCHERZO

Through rising chorus
it enters the frame
Mane lifts and falls
in the mist
Single horn rises from its crown
Hooves strum misty air
and paw at high grasses

Your heavy head is fixed
in your palm gaze fastened
beyond photos that rest against
unturned pages of chords
Our ambivalence culls finally
through a single note Middle C
That your finger finds over and
over

Your unredeemable life
feels different now
Something unrecovered
an arrow a bone a shiny bit
of metal that catches the sun
as if it served this purpose only
to reveal A feeling so sharp
we mistake it for divine

When the day dream ends
and you rise from darker
shadow we sense it
How your life now reaches
beyond this room
It swells and beats
like a heart we wish
was our own

Matthew Babcock

Forms: V

1. McKenzie, Scott. “San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair).” Words and Music by John Phillips. Ode 103, 1967.

- a. “There’s a whole generation with a new explanation, people in motion, people in motion.”

Here’s the blunt confusion in one blue contusion, purple on maroon, purple on maroon.

It’s that rushed carousal before the flushed arousal, painful on Monday, painful on Monday.

We’re one huge conurbation beneath each frail constellation, skyline to starlight, skyline to starlight.

I’m the wholesale refusal to your prying perusal, masque for mummary, masque for mummary.

2. Federal Trade Commission. *Credit, ATM, and Debit Cards: What to Do if They’re Lost or Stolen*. Rexburg: Madison County Library, 2002.

- a. “Cut up old cards—cutting through the account number—before disposing of them” (2).

Whip up cruel canards—cavorting about like bewitched lumber—without dwelling on details.

Toss together grilled paninis—salivating over the Roma tomatoes—circa staving off starvation.

Pummel away crude absurdities—shadowboxing vis-à-vis your dimwit doppelgänger—upon ascending to enlightenment.

Escape through spangly illusions—sliding astride the rainbow arc—sans stealing secret gold.

Round up your band—hiring out the backup drummer—minus renting the garage.

Flush out cacophonous cockatoos—watching from the jungle floor—
when hankering after flight.

Stare at crayfish consommé—blocking out the clanging alarm—
before bolting for safety.

Revel in sodden miseries—moping indoors all overcast March—
until eloping with ecstasy.

Taste test grandiloquent tropes—sidling across your satirical skywalk—beyond
settling for simplicity.

Simmer in sumptuous slander—shimmying up the spiral staircase—
before jumpstarting a slugfest.

Sashay in shimmering kimonos—savoring subtly each sultry step—
save slinking like a sidewinder.

Skedaddle behind yonder shack—galloping in a sidesaddle posture—
after shotgunning bandy-legged bandits.

Bawl out the blowhards—letting fly a spittle storm—before barking
your shin.

Gaze at the river—crossing in a rattletrap ambulance—while praying
for her.

3. Catullus. *The Poems of Catullus*. A Bilingual Edition Translated by James Michie. New York: Vintage, 1969.

- a. “But what a girl swears to the man who loves her ought to be scribbled on water,
scrawled on air” (187).

For how a worker loafs on the job that feeds him tends to be laced
with lethargy, soaked in serenity.

- b. “Now spring warms up the world again, and the wild elements of the equinoctial sky
fall silent at the entrance of the mild west wind” (79).

Some trifle takes away the foreman today, and the temp workers
in the infundibular dust stand mute in the lull of a long lunch break.

- c. “Not long ago the sun was always shining, and, loved as no girl ever will be loved,
she led the way and you went dancing after” (29).

Into steel dumpsters light tubes are hourly sailing, but, chucked as all trash can be chucked, they whirl like spokes, and the din goes bounding beyond.

- d. “Suns when they sink can rise again, but we, when our brief light has shone, must sleep the long night on and on” (25).

Cigarettes if they burn will glow orange, and lunches, if stale salami sandwiches were packed, will squelch the gnawing hunger now and later.

4. Van Gogh, Vincent. *The Complete Letters of Vincent Van Gogh*. With reproductions of all the drawings in the correspondence. New York: Bulfinch Press, 1958.

- a. “Damn it, brother, the Rappards acted intelligently, but here!!!!” (229).

Take off, hoser, the Reaganites pussyfooted legislatively, not cool!!!!
Avaunt ye, miscreant, the Rochefoucaulds perspired lavishly, heigh ho!!!!
Screw it, primo, the Reds pitched lousily, hell no!!!!
Consarn it, varmint, the Redcoats posture ludicrously, dag nabbit!!!!
Avast ye, matey, the Raiders plundered lustily, by cracky!!!!
Right on, mamma, the Rastafarians parade luridly, yah man!!!!

- b. “Poetry surrounds us everywhere, but putting it on paper is, alas, not so easy as looking at it” (12).

Pollution kills people globally, and removing it from our environment is, like, just as vital as eradicating it gone.

- c. “The crayon has a real gypsy soul” (2).

Glib gibbons grub for gritty guava globules.

- d. “And in the same way I also think great the sidewalks of Paris and the people that know their Paris” (338).

Scarred by that rare urge we scarcely declare purged the skylscapes
of Scranton or strangers who panhandled in Scranton.

- e. “Most certainly I think differently, I feel differently, I act differently” (338).

How boldly clouds lurch forcefully, clouds tumble abundantly, clouds drum
resoundingly!

5. Webster, Daniel. “The Natural Hatred of the Poor to the Rich, From a Speech in the Senate of the United States, January 31st 1834, on ‘The Removal of The Deposits.’” *The Great Speeches and Orations of Daniel Webster with an Essay on Daniel Webster as a Master of English Style* by Edwin P. Whipple. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1879.

- a. “As I wish that movement to be free, intelligent, and unbiased, the true manifestation of the public will, I desire to prepare the country for another appeal, which I perceive is about to be made to popular prejudice, another attempt to obscure all distinct views of the public good, to overwhelm all patriotism and all enlightened self-interest, by loud cries against false danger, and by exciting the passions of one class against another” (359).

Because they want my attention to be scattered, infertile, and defused,
a smashed loom of loose red loops, workers chatter to chase my thoughts from my
space, thoughts they suspect are poised to be molded in noble golds, an intrusion
that torches my Bohemian blueprint for a private trance, that invades with clichés
and crass sloganized T-shirts,
with clunky thumps in fiberglass buckets, and with rehashing the action from
Friday night with relish.

- b. “And whoever has the wickedness to conceive, and the hardihood to avow, a purpose to break down what has been found, in forty years’ experience, essential to the protection of all interests, by arraying one class against another, and by acting on such a principle as *that the poor always hate the rich*, shows himself the reckless enemy of all” (361).

Turkey vultures show their power to swarm, also their tendency toward stealth, a
spell to wake up who is not aware, with a velvet summons, ornamental in our
visions of black majesty, by cycling one spiral through another, and by sending
down such a notion as *that the earthbound daily envy the lofty*, proclaim
themselves the soundless outlaws of sky.

Sonya Wohletz

Particle Theory

I. First Part

We collided protons with a block of meadow
And waited
for an urge to pass—a speck of dust we
couldn't name
but called
The Dawn.

II. Corollary

When water rises in the tank of sky, we call each other
out in leptons and quarks, Gasping soft ovals
In our mouths— These Plum Blossoms in early Spring. How we
Missed their jade bones and frozen faces—
Young women in the snow, eyes casting warmth through
Aether sinks—or did they travel back through time?
To another place, before the sun burrowed and spilt forth from Harsh soils,
Cold, sore. like Thursday.
aching for those older stars,
Great blue Behemoths that gobbled up right angles
As if they were nothing,
as if the body had no form to wield its desire. We
Didn't know; or rather, barely something—

This splaying of fingers after prayers collide,

These proteins chaining together cutleries.

And yet others;

nurse strained chemicals;

set ligaments like long and angry clouds,

A cirrus code of dust, gas, and especially

Heat. determined

points that ellipse out into waves—or

Was it that we came too soon? Or was it, rather,

A slow descending circle, pouring earth into

Wells of itself

Tombs where prairie grasses shelter stones.

We seek them out

and bundle golden sheaves,

Deciding the seasons.

No, not this one.

Ia. Proof of the First Part

An absolute

Will sprout bare wings

and stumble.

Ila. Proof of the Corollary

Radical light seeps out like syrup

As we inveigh against the night

And pry seeds of circus from our mouths.

How did it feel?

You asked me—nothing, less
Than genesis. I guess. I laughed then,
So simple! When, really, the matter
Was so small and round,

A taste of cherry—pleasant, still,
yet came to form—tough like
Numbers, angry like the
Wormhole livers

That birth stranger flavors. Then: a
boneyard where process comes to close
And cast out those who gnash their
Teeth, begging for gravity
To take.

Then: soft again, a core of iron
Come autumn.

III. Second Part

They did build the
filter wide and deep
below the lip of other
furnaces, hoping to

capture whispered
chords, the channels
of quiet twisting
back through coils,
cold coils

to the magma heart:
stay. tell us,

bite.

IIIb. The Second Part has no proof

Dead hairs a rabbit

Howl.

She makes breakfast

She thieves code—her fingers

Tremble;

Searching amber filaments

Tie together.

Flood her highways.

She devours

One. and then

The last.

They Staged a Pyramid Cast

they staged a pyramid cast
in copper soil—out there along the
edge of enemy where prayers are boiled
and set to dry beside

A naked pool of ghosts

upon the midnight stone they raised
a crop of oiled blades; we nourished
these with drops of thought--
frustration caught on edge,

words that spatter against a tired canvas sky.

Hurry,

We are hungry.

Cole Pragides

Villanelle for the Performance Art of Running Into an Ex

A hug in an enfilade,
and I keep finding splinters in my hands.
Last on the proscenium, I look forward to

how the acoustics can't catch your voice.
In my findings, I keep splintering my hands — and
in an enfilade, a hug.

The voice catches how your acoustics can't,
and in finding splinters I hand my keep
forward, on the proscenium. I look to last

the catch. Can't voice how your acoustics
splinter findings. In my hands — and I keep
hugging enfilades in an — a

voice the acoustics catch. How can't you
find and keep? My hands into splinters, I
look forward on I, the last proscenium.

voicing how your acoustics catch the can't
in. I, keeping splinters and my hands finding
an enfilade in a hug.
On this proscenium, I look forward to the last
line?

Commented [1]: hey kyle. can't believe we got paired up to discuss THIS poem lol

Commented [2]: Hmm, I wonder what meaning of enfilade the author was citing. According to Google, an enfilade can be "a volley of gunfire directed along a line from end to end," or "a suite of rooms with doorways in line with each other." It can even be a verb wherein one is to "direct a volley of gunfire along the length of (a target)."

Commented [3]: A proscenium is "the metaphorical vertical plane of space in a theatre, usually surrounded on the top and

Commented [4]: yeah, i did theater for 4

Commented [5]: Because of the previous

Commented [6]: it's called a "stanza"

Commented [7]: i looove how the form is

Commented [8]: Is it possible the author

Commented [9]: this is how im interpreting

Commented [10]: I just think you're

Commented [11]: There is still a hug

Commented [12]: mayhaps the narrator felt

Commented [13]: a sacrifice had to be

Commented [14]: What do you think the

Commented [15]: when u find a splinter in ur

Commented [16]: The narrator is getting

Commented [17]: are they being possessed

Commented [18]: this is how i feel when u

Commented [19]: the sudden interjection

Commented [20]: the voice has finally been

Commented [21]: i can never do more than

Commented [22]: does it hurt when they

Commented [23]: the narrator keeps

Commented [24]: the last stage the

Commented [25]: an understanding of what

Commented [26]: the splinters haven't been

Commented [27]: i guess u can always find

Commented [28]: every human relationship

Commented [29]: this itself, is a proscenium

Commented [30]: i hope u get a zero on this

Commented [31]: This is the most

James Grabill

Remains on the Rise of Seawater Sense

I. This Matter

This place rolls, revolving, circling
the only sun that appears to be passing over
the living cells in which it has rooted, the sun

over revolving mineral mother matter, as what you'd call the door
to the—I don't know—no horses—

so we sat and flew to—we got
somewhere no one could name

just to make the ends meet,
but met more than we knew

each according to each, through the receivership
of breath in common, water in common.

Where regions depend on light,
heavy winds have ripped into bearings
that heal only in presence in gratitude for this life.

Whichever animals manage to survive and endure
inherited wounds at depths
of unreachable entanglement after the petrol flash
into spontaneous galaxy out of cellular script

in superimposed long lineages, as great grandfathers-mothers

deployed this head-to-head sense and hourly newborn nakedness
of onionskin split seconds
that converge on us now.

II. Veracity That Remains

Responding to gravity
 of uncertainty
 maybe we were slow to notice
 where charged engines have burned
 into mitosis , after a catastrophic century
 had the glaciers melting over shipping-carton streets
 as tomahawk as home-grown jolts
 rife with pre-existence
 over unwavering cold-water sinks
 we've overheard from halfway down
 in reciprocating old railyard lanterns
 guided by the remarkable unseen in Celsius-laden forestry
 with dumped arsenic ash reaching valley-floor nerve
 in the swum-fierce underground
 still beetling up or down in our conditions.
 for the consequences of craving
 cracked into allow nuclear nation-states
 to go unspooled in negative positives
 from hip-lashed floundering flat-out crowning within winds blowering
 wilderness pickerel in conscription haunted ragged by jaguar remnants,
 peaking of word from the cradle in a dinner bowl wild card's chance
 to fall soft on pungent Azorean breezes out of pollinated Teutonic hymns
 to stand what boot steps flatten.

But how do you prove something nobody knows?
How do you know the speed of your horse
when everybody's racing down the road in consciousness
where the road has been thrown into fast forward

as if it were only natural to move faster every second they're expecting you at work and then home?

IV. Reverberatum

The air you're breathing
belongs to you more than to others if only a few moments.

As if a new species were taking its first steps, a man
stumbles, refusing to believe satiation can be a road to emptiness
or squealing machinery makes people on the line replaceable

with Gnosticism that's nascent, the body of data hungry,
when a good half of this era stands in the maw of redemption,
 ready to undergo redesign, understanding no one
should be denied necessities or aid in a time of emergency.

That is, as small as the voice
of the self may be, if nothing much needs to be said about dying in full,
from overexposures to hope, why not establish residence
in what brought us here out of stillness
with its sacred trust that invented transformation

when nothing became something,
when something was perceived?

where leaves comb power out of light given this chance to live
cloaked in dangerous familiars lifted off stallion shoulders,
which must be only natural a full expansion of the frontier

from synergistic earnestness with its appetites
where we must take great care to ensure that the pumping heart heals

as the mother root is expedited with expediency out of raw exile

the plugged-in guitar claims parametric enclosure for the mindful

the overflow fusion at brazen depths reddens in the flash of wings.

V. Water in Common

We've seen the river always pushing the dung-ball wave
ahead of its anaconda body,

the river under a kingfisher bill in nanoseconds of beauty,
in drops on a leaf, the briefest wooden flute
sound of a seed falling , between generations.

We've seen the urgency of water
 taking its time heading back to the ocean
 the origin of numbers flowing in innocence from before symbolism
 the non-stop mothering from before words for forgiveness,

in transcendental flames of evaporation, bison-thundered falls of Genesis,
the beginning of spiral ratios one leaf to the next.

We've seen water which is endlessness unrestrained by the banks
with water unable to stop levitating
molecule by molecule , flying into dreamtime
current in the river passing
through membrane to become blood delivering to every cell

the river of heaviness hauling meditation rooms down
from the mountain forever into the moment
after animating ten-thousand veins in a splash
reaching a hundred-thousand synapses a second.

We've seen heaviness pour out of the surface leaping with gravity
as cold liquid electricity

thickening the air with many long drinks of water,
the river, throwing open its front room forever proving honesty
an ocean of cells, breath the incessant waves makes the place
crashing into shores, flames of evaporation everywhere we go.

Lisa Brognano

Bends, Binds, Loops, and Hitches

OSSEL HITCH

down
over
behind
over
under
through

PLANK SLING (OTTO BUTTON)

around
over
under
through
together

DOUBLE
OVERHAND BEND

loop
through
pretzel
second rope through
under
through both

KLEMHEIST

Wrap loop
1, 2, 3x
around rope
pass lower loop
through upper
pull snug

TOM FOOL'S

left loop
right loop
cross them
pull through
east and west
tighten bow



Priya Tamang

Psychedelic

I am ending in a bokeh
of fairy lights, a hue cycle of chroma
varnished with colors I've never seen.

I am ending in shades
of tinted undertones,
each daub – a mistaken grief,
a frescoed canvas of forgotten friends.

I am ending in vibgyor verses
of laminated whitewash,
taken aback by the splendor
of a graying, black and white.

I am ending in a rainbow, a spectrum of saturation.
Withal and although, my prismatic cessation.

Cyrus Shafii

Don't Bite Your Nails, Pseudo-essay poem

Don't bite your nails, it's an ugly habit
Do sit politely, with your ankles crossed and hands in your lap
Don't shout at night
Don't shout in the morning
Don't shout at all, the neighbors will get the wrong idea
Do listen when we talk to you
Don't bite your nails, your fingers are bleeding
Do smile when smiled at
Do come when we call
Do yourself a favor and stop shouting squirming picking your nose crying — don't you dare
cry — and stop biting your nails before we cover them in hot sauce so help me
Don't stop breathing
Don't stop breathing
Don't oh dear baby please don't do this to us
I'm sorry
Do lay there, taking up as little space as possible
Don't come up when it rains
Do stay there
Do stay there
Don't moan when the police come by asking why you haven't been in class for nearly a month
Do keep dirt off the rugs
Don't try to eat us
Don't eat your fingers, dear, it's getting hard to explain

Thomas Osatchoff

STONE INTO TURN TO

What was the first anguish? A tiny mutation?
What if we didn't learn it or any characters?
Do you like spelling tests? Yes, fix it! While I was
wondering if we could think in pictures....Lily,
my student, said *cucumber* when *computer* was meant.
My device wears lapidified lotus leaves. Princely,
a melting frog, hops on what floats. Lily,

a melting frog, hops on what floats. Lily,
my device wears lapidified lotus leaves. Princely,
my student, said *cucumber* when *computer* was meant.
Wondering if we could think in pictures....Lily,
do you like to play spelling? Yes, trick it! While I was
what if we didn't learn it or any characters?
How did language begin? If this is the first...into
the mirror of repetition.

TO TURN INTO STONE

What if we are time? Each of us? Perhaps the first T was forgotten. T for what?

No results found for orchtrailing. Starving in the orchard of light gone dark during these tricky times

slide into some suggestions: Make sure all words are lit correctly. Slide! Suddenly, a light hops into the lamp. Slides into a lotus lantern for a hope.

Lapidified prints

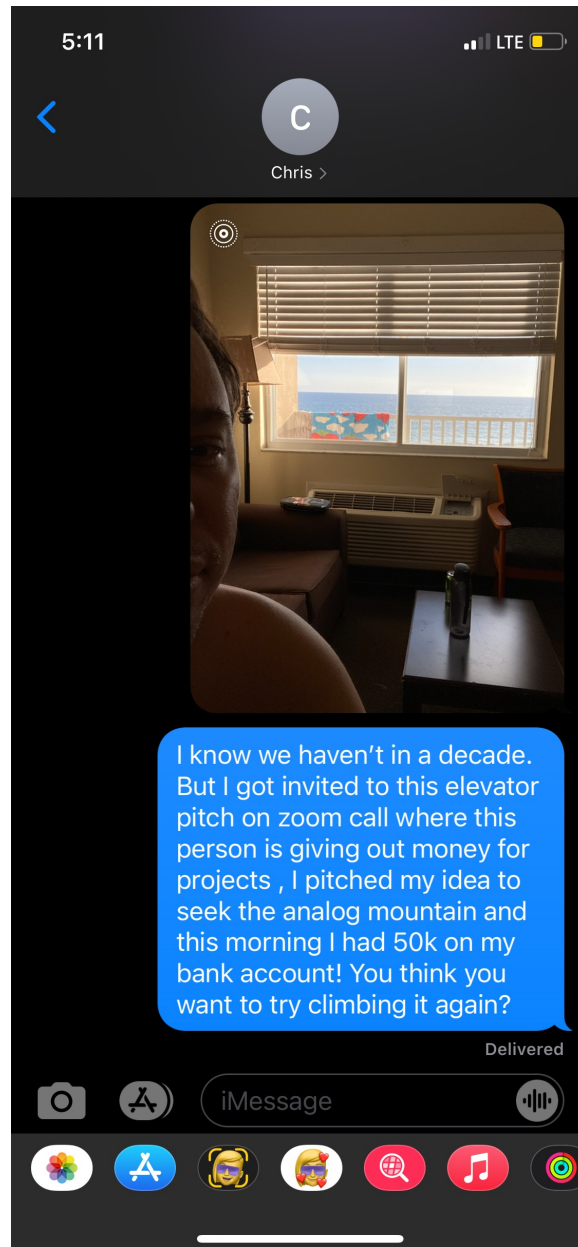
translated to *computer* but *cucumber* was meant. T'm thinking we can think in pictures. T'm sliding! Ouch or let's play a language sound game. What's the first thing that comes to slide of mind on hearing these words: crown, mouse, door, pour, court?

T'm, do you like to play on a slide? Yesense! Asking myself! T'm,
what if we didn't learn the alphabet? Carry any character's cross? T'm tense,
how did language begin? What was the first time? Or it was forgotten so as to be
forgotten—the T. All letters derived from etching. Xing. Can time flow without carving?
Can we catch time? Time tortured. Let's play timeball.

How and why were the first letters chosen? Impressed in urn. What can't be engraved?

Frank Weaver

6:11pm



Anna Idelevich

Was quiet on the moonlit path

Was quiet on the moonlit path
and poured lingonberry juice into the water
half-wild beast,
half-killed century,
snow and scarlet fur,
for you, for you.

Burned as much as he could
and by morning, broken by a star, lay down
on the cuts of the paws,
cradle of sleep...
My paper night
and love winter.

Giles Goodland

Either

If the event has a terminus, it also has a path, either implicit or overt. If you don't want the path to show, either select transparent, or either the text or its path using the pick tool. Either that or stray away from the line either in an unlined school-style notebook, or on printouts. We classify each smolt movement as either day or night. The Northern Song Dynasty can either move ahead, or decline. Your spouses have either left you or refuse to understand. You die either without knowledge, or your lifetime's experience proves useless. Monad or Nomad? Either state binds us either in the unperceived figure or the pump-screen either before or after the grit-channel. Slurry sieves are either froth-pumps or used as either a core or prepreg, or products are either organized bodies or organs of perception. I experience either a difficult lawsuit or a dangerous disease, either an easy lawsuit or a light disease. We branch on either edges or customers. The extra white ball may be dropped by either hand. My train goes through a narrow corridor with bare rock on either side, then into a row of either office cubicles or changing booths. I keep thinking S is lost, but he is either slightly ahead or slightly behind. I am either a serial murderer or sharing a house with one. We have either foot on the ground, are trending in either an up or a down manner, from month-to-month or hand to mouth. My out-breathings form clouds which change into either water or fire. To discard either the 4 or 6 of hearts renders the other worthless. After a while you go lower, until you touch the floor on either side. If the client requests it angle the spindles either out or in. Include either aluminium or polymer handguards. Either run the words together or separate with underscores. Either change the current directory to the directory containing the file, or convert either platform into a Universal Service Weapon. You can either draw the table with the Draw Table command, or insert a table using the table tool in the toolbar. Now either open your primary file or create one by opening a new file and saving it under the same name. Watch a 1930s spectacular, either Nazi or Soviet or Busby Berkeley, either in a light-dark rhythm or under continuous light. There is scarcely a difference either in plane or scale between the tiger-masks and the dragon motives. Figure 1 shows a water stand probe holder designed to read either side of a Bendix coupling with six channels. It may be corrected by either reducing the overall lens size or numbering the junction point in a program flow, either by means of signals or by physical transportation of data. Rotate either the hexagonal pattern or the alignment key until an axis of symmetry is reached. Is either subject-matter or form the chief interest in your work?

Shyla Shehan

Still Life at Big Lake

We rode our bikes to a fat unripe pear. It was a Big Lake we wandered around
and found torn edges, yellowing and curved up at the corners. It was a half-moon pear
sliced through with pavement swallowed in cornflower blue flat wash when it rained.
There was a playground dangling
in the distance, with busted swings on rusted chains.
No children went there or the ball field or the lake whose shallow pear bottom was a swamp
with a “no fishing” sign sticking out. Rumor was, it was descended from a famous glacier
but you can’t see that in the frame. There’s just pale yellow loess
rising around it, lined with trees twisting to a vanishing point.
Our grandfather was born and drowned there
but we climbed out
and ran away.

Radoslav Rochallyi

So save me

Yesthe (mod Whole), i = world, ..., is (i i) – so wake $\frac{me}{up}$

$\dots \frac{just}{amen}$

Bad = ; ;

Terrible

a) $\begin{pmatrix} \text{crum} & \text{my} \\ \text{lit} & \text{tle} \\ \text{ro} & \text{om} \end{pmatrix}$, be) $\begin{pmatrix} \text{safe?} & I & \text{think?} \\ I & \text{Think!} & \text{Therefore} \\ I & \text{am} & ? \end{pmatrix}$, can) $\begin{pmatrix} \text{you} & \text{sa} & \text{ve} \\ \text{me} & \text{from} & \text{my} \\ - \text{self} & ? & - I \\ \text{only} & \text{hear} & \text{laughter} \end{pmatrix}$

Julie Benesh

NOTES FROM THE NIGHT (A BOOK SPINE STORY)



This is it. How we die: the midnight disease, the noonday demon, the message to the planet, intimations of mortality.

Brightness falls, the bright hour from where you dream. Ideas of heaven, cruising paradise, (almost paradise). The world below blue beyond blue, a gate at the stairs.

Fear of dying penitent, with roses.

And yet they were happy, living to tell. Talking about death won't kill you; nothing to be frightened of.

This is the story of a happy marriage.

This. This. This. Is. Love Love. Love.—no cheating, no dying; honeymooners keeping a rendezvous, beyond deserving, in the language of love, while I was gone, lost in the forest, in the gathering woods, stealing time, the year of magical thinking, the year of reading Proust, the year I saved my (downsized) life, your best year yet!

Kelly Chitwood

Breathe

There is an island in the middle of the lake.
I need to be there.
To drift out toward it, at the center of that blue, glittering water.

We claim the tiny pier as our own that afternoon. It juts out from the shore, a narrow, splintering walkway made of sun-bleached boards. It bobs gently with the waves, rocks whenever one of us leaps in, to show off or to splash around in sudden obnoxious bursts. A water-proof speaker sits in the ice chest, mingling with the empty beer bottles and cans of soda still waiting. The music pounds out a deafening beat. Shrieks and laughter echo across the otherwise quiet water.

Kayla and Ari start to argue. They spend most of their time like this; airing out their dirty laundry only when there's a ready audience. I watch Kayla behind my water-flecked sunglasses. The pattern makes my world look spotted, distorted. I see Kayla inhale, as if to ignite another battered complaint. Ari, never getting enough sunscreen on Kayla's neck. Ari, not having enough fun. It all dies on her lips when she notices, or thinks she notices, nobody watching. There's no point if none of us are at the ready to jump in, to take a side.

I sit in a pink, donut-shaped float, a rope tying me to one of the rusted cleats off the pier. It creaks as the soft current tries to pull me away. I want to let it.

Instead, I remove my sunglasses and set them down by the cooler and the crushed cans. It's easy to slip out of the float, to let the chill water submerge my reddening, sun-hot skin. The contrast shocks me awake. I feel like I can breathe there under all that blue.

I stay submerged like this long enough for Georgie to take notice and jump in for my undesired rescue. He lands in a cannonball, nearly on top of me. The bubbles blur my view of the unmoving lake below. I resurface and use both hands to dunk his head back under the water. He surges up again, sputtering and cackling as I push away from him. Drift away.

None of them notice or care as I start my backstroke. Each plunge of my arm is a thoughtless, languid gesture. They draw me toward the place I really wanted to be without instruction.

I'm stopped just short of the island when something brushes the back of my legs. I feel the cautionary bite of rock at my ankles and look down below. Under me, the water glows. It shines in the sunlight against the white rocks that form what look like... Caves. Small tunnels. They've embedded themselves in the rocks just below the surface, just off my little island. It's like looking at the tip of an iceberg, and now finally seeing all that lies beneath it. Inside the little network of caves I see the undisturbed moss and grass drifting through it. They're alive here beneath the undisturbed water.

I take in a deep breath and let myself sink. I swim down to one of the tunnels in the rocks and peer inside. From here, I can see sunlight pouring into it, other entrances dotting the path down into the tunnels. I dare to venture in. It's not much wider than my shoulders.

I do this, perhaps for an hour, resurfacing for air then diving back down to test myself, to see how far I can wriggle my way around these shallow little caverns before I have to spring up, to gasp for air.

I find things stuck in the walls. Not on them. In them. A mosaic of lost things. The bottoms of glass bottles. Half a pair of sunglasses. Obsidian shards. Pennies. Nickels. The white key of a piano. I see what looks like a single pearl as big as my little fingernail, wedged behind a large stone. It's warm against my touch. I imagine the sun has been gazing at it through the crystal surface above us for more years than I've lived.

I pick at it with my thumb until it budes. I have to go up once for breath before coming back down and prying it off the rock wall. I watch it sparkle in my hand, remnants of brittle rock flaking from its surface. They float back to the walls, mingling with moss.

When something first obscures my vision, I think it must be long tendrils of grass drifting over me. When I look up and see her face, I gasp, sucking in a lungful of water.

It's her hair that has settled over me. Long, dark wisps tangled with moss and chips of driftwood. She stares, the current drawing her mangled strands over me towards the mouth of the cave. Her skin is a pale patchwork of greens and whites, and I see she's covered in small, clear scales. She fills up the tunnel in front of me with her lithe body, her floating locks of hair. There are no clothes on her, just a tangle of netting that traps pieces of things; A broken comb, rusting bits and bobs. The girl—the *thing*— continues to watch me with sharp, needle-like teeth. She is horrid, and beautiful.

I don't tell the others what happened when I get back. Most of the boys are wasted, drunkenly trying to light the grill up at the cabin for dinner. The late sun is orange on the water. It turns the glassy surface black underneath. I hoist myself up on the pier rather than swimming the full length back to the shore. My body in the open air feels heavy; all I wanted to do was stay down there in the darkening water. Ari is alone in a folding chair, his golden hair bleached by a weekend out here on the pier. A soft *plop* sound punctuates his silence. I watch his wrist flick as he throws another bottle cap into the lake.

"What were you doing over there?" He asks me before I can ask about Kayla. I shrug.

"Searching around." I say.

"Find anything good?"

I hold up the rigid thing in my hand and Ari squints against the falling sun. "Looks like lava rock." He says. It is. Small, flat, and stark black. I nod, pocketing it in my board shorts. I head back to the cabin, the howls of our friends scattering the birds up in the pine trees.

When I shove open the cabin door a wall of heat swallows me. My face twists as the cool lake water on my skin and in my hair clings to me with humid fervor. Marisol chuckles from the open kitchen.

"Air conditioner's broken." She informs me, and hands me a half-frozen water bottle, the sweat of it dripping down her arm and now mine too. Our fingers touch as it passes between us,

and Marisol smiles. I ignore what it might mean. Marisol and I... All I can think about is Ari and Kayla. Our group as a whole. What we're like, together, on weekends like this. The cabin air continues to cling to me as I walk through our circle of friends playing a board game without all the pieces, out to where a deck is waiting for me, empty, on the other side of the cabin. I sit down on the dried, unpolished wood and let my feet dangle over the edge. The forest beyond is like a lake in its own way, lush and full of the quiet kind of life that fills me up, even from up here. I wonder if I can keep standing a life like the one happening inside the cabin behind me, heavy and clinging at my back.

"Hey there, loner." The screen door flaps shut behind Georgie with a weak bang. I hear him take a seat in the wicker deck chair somewhere beside me. A pop, then the fizzle of a beer can opening. There's something coy in his voice. I think he thinks it's alluring. That maybe I'll hope he only uses it when he's talking to me.

"We're going to watch a movie later." Georgie says, and I stare at the trees. "Something scary or something dumb as shit. What do you think?"

My fingers graze over the lump in my pocket, plucking at the damp fabric keeping it there.

"I think I'm going to go for another swim."

"Again?" He's irritated, but he won't complain. Georgie is cool. Laid back. Maybe he thinks I wear the same facade as him. That's why I don't chat back much when we're alone like this.

"Geeze, you really like that lake." He mutters.

I look over at Georgie and smile. I can already feel the water carrying me away again. The weightless, cool embrace of the lake. Georgie manages a grin back at me, confused.

"Well, dinner's on. Send Ari back in here while you're at it." And then he's gone, back inside the cabin. The door seems to slam shut with the finality I am waiting for.

I wade into the water from the shore this time, the light of day all but gone behind a violet haze of mountain ranges. I can't find Ari. I hope he's found a place he'd rather be too. I paddle slowly out until the sand disappears from beneath me.

She meets me halfway. She only breaches the surface up to her eyes. I shiver. Her eyes are a milky black.

I dig into my pocket as I tread the water. When I raise the rock to her face, she seems to appraise it. From this close, I can see gills. She is covered in gills. Little slices on her rough skin. On her neck, on her chest, in the spaces between her ribs. She is breathing, a haggard sound up here above the water, like she's choking on air.

"There was a volcano around here, a long time ago." I offer. I turn red. She knows that, I think. She knows everything about this place.

"I know you wanted something made by people, but... But I found this while I was out today and I thought—" I thought there was nothing better than a piece of this place. She slips the rock into her tangle of netting, her clutch of treasures. Her closed fist comes back up to show me a pair of sunglasses, my sunglasses from the pier.

“You’ll find what you like to keep soon.” The sound from the creature’s throat is like broken glass, like the crackling of an uproarious fire. Her voice is not meant to be heard up here, on the surface. Before I can grin, relieved, she grabs me.

I’d drowned once before. When I was young, a cousin and I had on our life vests in a river. We weren’t allowed to go far, and yet we dared each other to go anyway. When the current took me and pinned me to felled log, I couldn’t fight the water that rushed over my head. I remembered the feeling forever; wanting to breathe, needing to breathe, and knowing that if I did I wouldn’t live for very much longer. It was funny. I wasn’t half a foot below the surface. Half a foot between being fine, and dying.

I scream as she wrenches me down. Her claws dig into my sides, and I feel each one tearing between my ribs, opening me up. She pushes me easily down into the cool embrace of the lake. I gasp, try to keep my throat closed.

“Breathe.” She sings, and her voice is beautiful. I shake my head, my lips pressed tightly shut. The surface rushes away from me. I hadn’t known the bottom would be so very deep.

“You must breathe.” She sings again. She doesn’t stop. I watch her as I burn. My chest, my throat, burning. The air leaves my lips in small, effervescent pearls until there’s nothing left but the burning. My neck slicing itself open. My pupils, bursting into expanses of glossy black. Burning and bursting.

Then, she kisses me.

I feel the flood of lake water pour into me. It fills up the new, torn spaces, washing out the burning I thought might swallow me up. It doesn’t.

The lake fills me. I close my eyes and see the island and the tunnels behind my lids. A vivid mosaic swirling and churning.

“Breathe.” She sings. So I do.

Donald Guadagni

Bird Song

Indifference, oblique, striated soot, where Hench it settles

No uniform layers of hydrocarbon emissions,

Invasive, passive, reactive consequence

What was blue, what should be blue, cannot be blue

Grays straining to be white, forfeiting purity

Insubstantial manifests, insidious demise,

Hydrous corruptions, eroding the process

No longer transparent, radicalized, ionized

All forms yield to the corrosion, facades fade

Generations' mutation, genomic aberrations,

Unsettling births into twisted spawn, unviable creations

Diurnal change, voices diminish, the chorus subsides

By moments, seconds, years, decades

The double helix unravels, proteins unbind

The waters are still, stagnant, hazardingly sterile

Stunted, short lived, genetically dead. The birds' songs ends.

Eric Delp

What Happened in Richfield

Utah was this:
the truck broke down
and the engine block
collapsed, crushing
in its metal teeth
the first two knuckles
of the first two fingers
of my right hand,
and I had the money neither
for the hospital nor the hotel room I'm calling from, Katherine,
to ask you to marry me.

It was the middle of nowhere, the autumn trees' limbs' bare and the atmosphere almost
unbreathably thin,

and I was stranded, Katherine,
on the highway's shoulder,
am stranded in this cheap hotel
and stranded on the telephone with you, three days out from Florida

and still another day
from San Francisco and the other girl you surely knew about,
my broken fingers blooming
blood into a bucket
of melting ice diluting
my traitor heart
abandoned by its own incessant leaving.

The light was pale and deathly; everything was dead
or dying
or falling apart,

and I was scared,
confused, alone,
and you were very far away. I was 23 years old
and I was tired
of everything.

And I saw that I'd been stranded my whole life, an ion
wavering between two poles:

Delp 6

pain and pleasure,
desire and fear,
the crimson sun setting
on the West Coast
of Florida, the white sun resurrected from the East Bay; and me on the gravel shoulder of the
long road between.

I realized
I would always be between two things neither here nor there until I chose
where I am
and chose
to call it home.

Joshua Martin

verbal manifestations

????

questions posed /
whispered / verbal manifestations
of saddened maneuvers

a dropped
tongue
proving
the absolute

of insignificance:

!!!!

valuations run out /
through / horizontal dreams
of days passing infinitely

the stick¹

the carrot²

bothersome³ blisters⁴

¹ spoken like truth carried over
into rotting fences bypassed
& singing

² night vision myths
carried over into reality
disappointment

³ i cannot know all the ways in which i cannot see myself for what i am & for what i am not

⁴ the price of chaos too high

not prized

unprovoked shots

too often fired

the inevitable

maiming the accepted

killing on mass

scales confused

for freedom

hopelessly apt⁵

.....

in the violence of
today & tomorrow
appears the amnesia
of the past /

recipes for
endings /

coded danger
simplified solutions
anti-intellectual tendencies
forlorn twilight dancing / thinking /

stunned
across
verbal

greed>>>>>

to me the \$ + % = 0<<<<<

inward calculations
succumbing to market
madness /

[“free me!”
“save me!”
“get me outta here!”

] (?)

you had the seasons to blame for your unremarkable customs
& i had the impossibility of living to blame of my cynicism;

all in all
the time
saved for
your (my)
self the
last bit
of dreaming
so we may
find ourselves
.

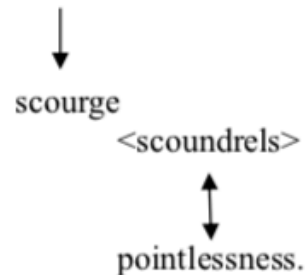
⁵ a simple equation will not do
the scientific method not a
solution to every problem

nothing out of nothing yields the nowhere that condemns



0
\
/
◇

at no time at all=the pressures + the worldwide curse of greed



scene 1:

lost to academic pride,
needless theory,
heartless nonsense
prose style senseless
jargon=
codes
lack of
perspective
endless egos.

scene 2:

consumerist logic=
illogical, dangerous,
purposelessness, a void=
cannot ever be
filled with things,
goods, material
wealth.

interlude:

sirens blaring in the constant
attempt to warm, to draw

attention to, little done, still
nothing out of nothing yields
the nowhere that condemns
& overwhelms /

simplistic design
<0+0-0=0,0,0,0=
nothing at all
to speak of /
cultural abyss
>

final scene:

the last best chance

to save the head from amputation

permanent
loss

destruction=

the despair of
the end all

the be all=

money is meaningless



ignorance the final
strangle hold perpetuated
upon a people steeped in
violence & pointless
nostalgia

← something
more must
come. something
in which to pull
us through.

something / anything.



Craig Finlay

Bird Bath

My mother was always deeply unsatisfied with the amount of knowledge in books. Any title on a subject she loved would inevitably grow heavy with magazine and newspaper clippings. A new, living edition from a static form of paper and binding, until they were so full that reading became difficult. Any turn of the page was likely to send narrow, fragile strips of print lazily spiraling down like wax flakes in a snow globe. I kept her copy of Gershwin's biography, like a poorly-stuffed trunk. I used to think, what's the use of a book you can't read? After she died I was cleaning the boxes of newspapers from her house and thought that an altar isn't meant to be a chair. Now, driving alone to a state where I know no one, I think of the time I saw a sparrow bathing in a rain-filled holy water basin in an abandoned cathedral. If the sparrow had known more this would be sacrilege. As it was, the sparrow shook. Water spilled down her feathers like the very cascades of God's love.

Dorothy Lawrenson

Ouroboros

here		here
is		is
truth		truth
enough		enough
form		form
gives		gives
fancy		fancy
a		a
helping		helping
hand		hand
a		a
permission		permission
of		of
sorts		sorts
granting		granting
attention		attention
to		to
standing		standing
words		words
in		in
order		order
like		like
Englishmen		Englishmen
for-		for
sake		sake
forms		forms
for		for
fair		fair
play		play
either		either
inverting		inverting
or		or
keeping		keeping
sense		sense
sound		sound
makes		makes
making		making
first		first
and		and
last		last



Wyeth Leslie

passive_distractions

```
(brunchfunction() {slideshow} (a,c) {b | |
(b=a,f=c,h.livefromPeriscope(imagefilters(add
{dogears(a,l,e)}),m())) } functioning()
{b&&f&&0<d.distractions(d.forEach(functioning(a)
{a(b,f)}),d=[])} day(a,c)whatwouldbe(thepurpose)
{inremovingtheseEvents("cohesioninculturaltastes?"
);{ {whyistheconceptof:selfcare("irresponsible")}
notalltastesshould("dictate"identity);butEventsshoul
dadd("measuredhappiness",b,e)} functioning(as)
{(a.harmlessstop-gaps) {halting=
thefrequentlymalignant.now
```

```
because {Jesus} ithurtswhencancer {passive:
0,capture:
0},h=[seepsintoyourmother'smarrow],b,f,d
=[];h.andEach(functioningmeasurement(of
ime)
{areonlyslippingseconds})noDelay=functionio
n {inevitable}
```

Jason Rodriguez

hue slants



Ai Jiang

STACCATO

The man you see
who plays beautiful sounds
on the grand piano,
often short,
breathless notes— staccato,
 sharp,
or flat—
because he can no longer
elongate each note with
the pedal by his static
feet. He can no longer slow
the gallop of black and
white keys.
Nor does he want to.
His notes like
rhythmic marching,
with staccato
 steps,
through the night alone,
close to the moon,
filling the ears of his silent
audience with notes
only he can play.

Stephen Guy Mallett

Gonflage

good plumose knows the
wind, heeds the tongue,
assesses

worth or total present-
absence of any once-wan
word's weight/deferral—

snow cannot fly meaninglessly
& so brindled; whirs through

our spine's gore-grey matters;
all under-watered roots unfurl;

no two flakes alike &
every note the same

& the words on my tongue—
gamut-borne—

joy-pining/yearning, living-
water, all (flummoxed-for—
plumose;

the just, boles' folds—
[cf. temparallels obliterated here]

& *here!*—or there,

the perpendiclar
flange, whinging—where,
wiry-supple,

evened enough!) for;
full bowdlerised/boughed
& subjunctive, sidereal duvets
& an indelible grasp—

deft/defiant

up, *up* & over any cul-
vert—supplemented by
dulcet-dour

notes—

core-compliant to all schisms
& forefold frames; fervor
that is

sufficient/substitution

for; lowly, flame-laved prisms;
for; wisdom as ley lines lie—

crook of your seashell neck—

tear-smeared plumes, brows
meeting; flume fumes prove
bleak, yet heaven-blackened—
far from fear-weakened &
with every wing/beating

Diffident in the
spicetrader's shitwind

Imbolc at Mænad Mt., ID

kicked all of him down past the down-east tracks of it all again (be it from mudcrab horsecrab heart- and/or home-county living like far-folks do full stop) and Barry made a real xmas ham of the situation, mind you—a whole production of jamming pointer fingers in each ear and each eye squint-looking at The Object. This, The Object seen questions curled tauter (in awe) and crossbow-legged, Barry's Object see now, rolled on down again. Ox-goad head hangs the real home-smell's dull sneer, Barry. Cheaper clock hands pass same as ever when spring rain rings wet around these old, but if—& when—in such mercurial springs—loathly fears feel firm like just winnow-gliders pass drooping by, then extraneous second handsmoke issues under the oversoar.

Knifed to alder boles some selfsame “so long!” ago, is all. Barry's good kind woman and getting smaller. Tell me by any wiser river's gaunt gait in an obliterated dim carried by, by birch twig brooms when bloodroot blooms; whisper in-side—and but so the waning gibbous room here is *here's* Object. “Usury.” Or more.

He's bound to a tune, Barry. Sublated, hung for the fridge. In infinite inanes again for a spell somewhere warm, stranger. Indelible for a hero's foment, roiling afterbirth's knelling palms up open, once or twice. For threadbare sighs (by the rinds) he chews on it too early. Why chew at all, Barry? but it's early (not too early) but enough, Barry! and not too early, maybe, with him out behind his lee and she's flushed fresh from the natal floor.

Dave Shortt

Tin

a hidden property
in the political structure
(still underground)

a dependency
on an aggressive filial yearning
(Odyssean),
to go down into, then out of
(resettling)
the rock

what's the relation to 'the oldest level'?
the 'hardest surface'? carapace to
an interior sightseeing, bronzeless

so they're
talking into a phone,
a crystal business, a
transient, entertaining hold

ores, amputated cognizances,
shining back & testing out
other things that were seen

but it was a mineral reaction,
a 'recitation'
that could be pieced together
by heating up one's lifetime(s)

side loops leading into other dimensions
still humanized with
earrings & tools

languages clinking obsolete
in which trade was practiced,
leaving behind trinket-envy
& shell games

chthonic
grotto interments with
'v-bored' buttons, inert
as strewn foil of candy & cigarette packs,
deadly
pewter antiques

genetic & volcanic elixirs
dammed behind nervous systems'
ruthless alloyings

cosmic & agnostic bubbles
in the animal kingdom,
being stirred into
grayish flesh-consciousness

tables set with cans (tins)
filled with leftovers, if not
beans & steel from which
a bronze sickle was shed

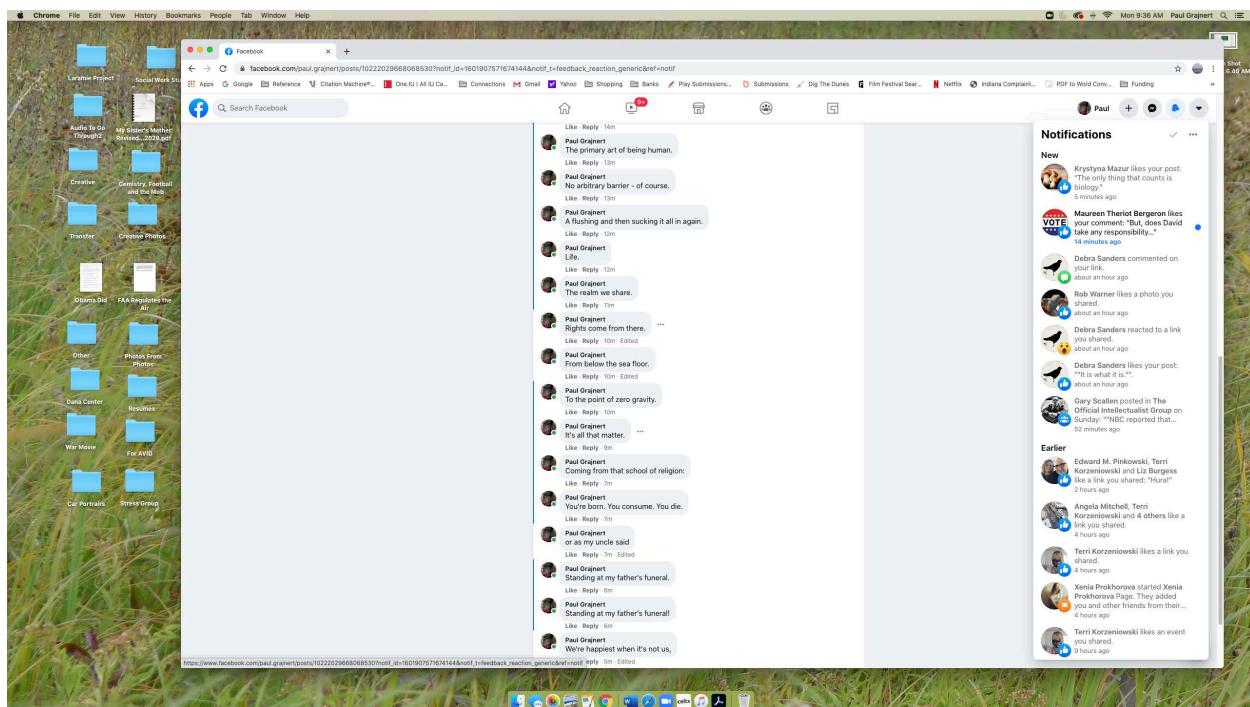
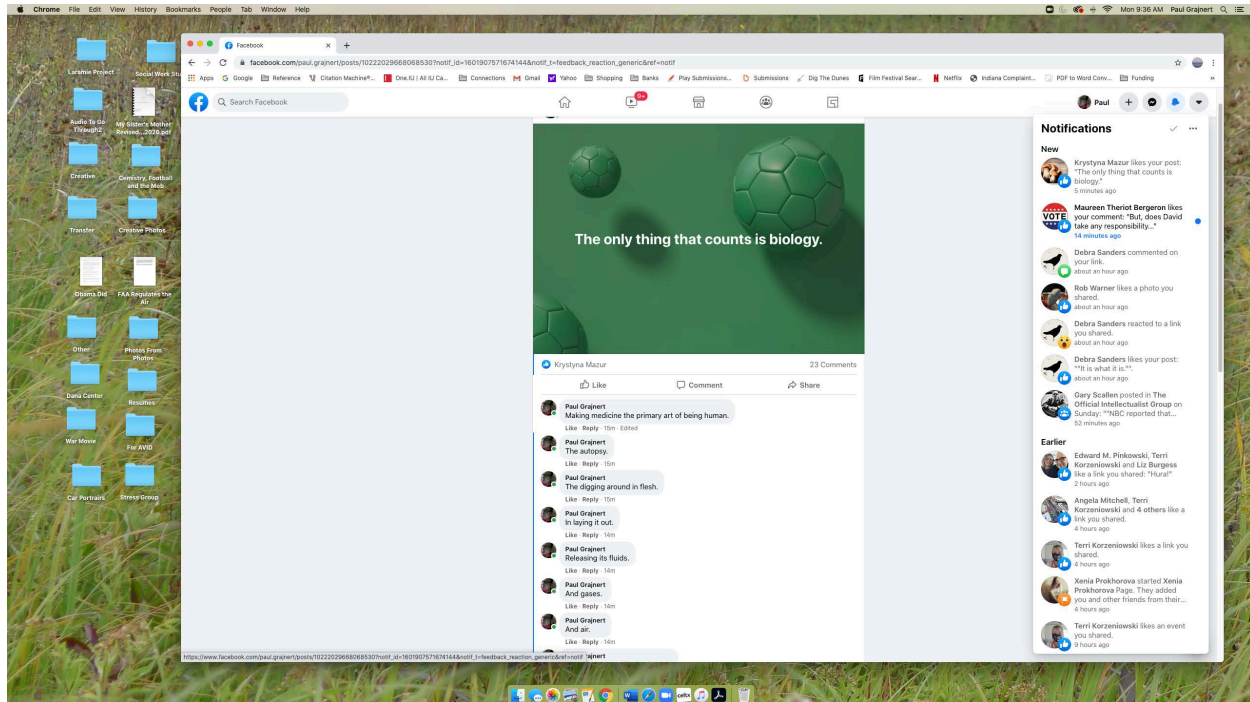
DNA coded
into a pennywhistle flurry
of jazz riff or molded lullaby

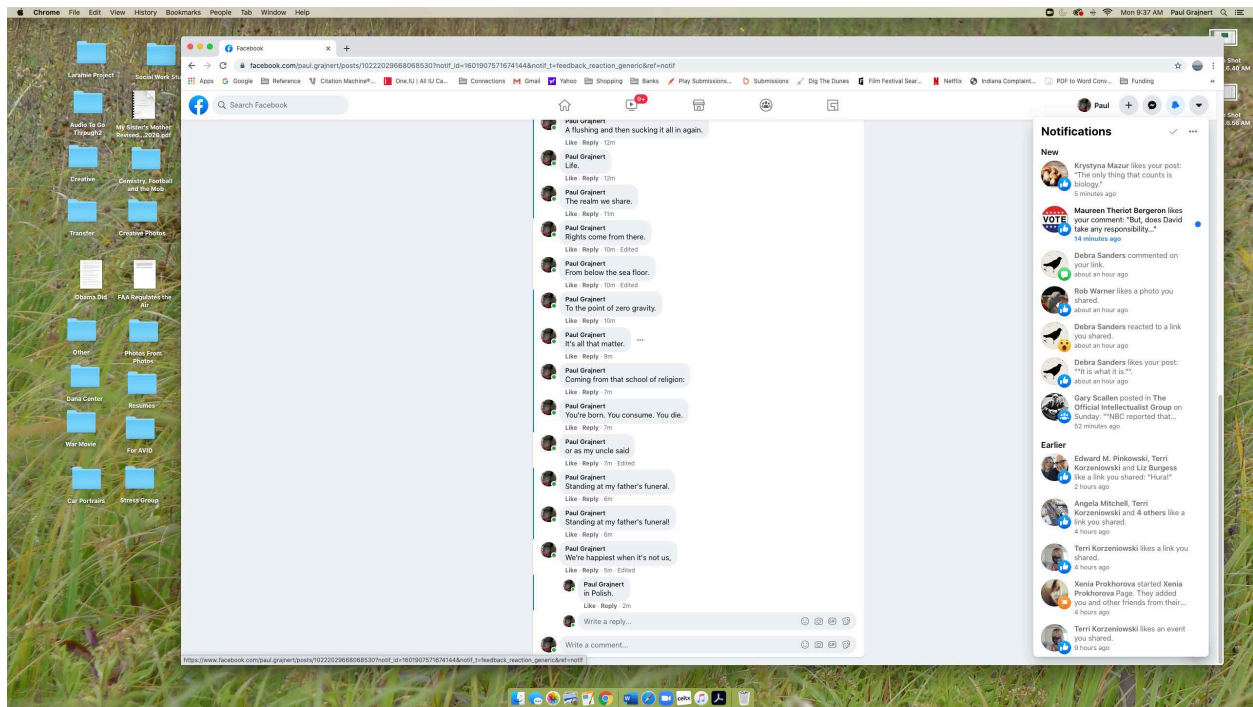
liberated from
genomes,
the notes (like promises
of lips & fingertips)
leaching back to earth,
bent, with scratches

'rare deposits of unsophisticated touches'

Paweł Grajner

Screen Shots





Stephen Mead

Boundaries Breaking

It's Time

words beyond themselves even
once paralyzed by space, over-

wrought,

now have hammered,

hammered

hand to mouth

the galaxy's crust to what

it was

water

all along nothing but

abundance

with the pen sensing this and
all that it has loved

finally in order to

embrace that

discarded.

Lana Perice

Learning

I. Lessons in prayer

I asked the first man to carve me from the deadbeat body of my father's love
to promise that I would never be back together again.

His love makes me a god of the Orient, cheap and luminous.

I learn to paint my skin so gold it blends in, let his mother pray at my feet.

"Ching-chong, ching-chong," she chants. Her bones break under my shame,
but I will not be my mother. I have cracked my teeth
on the ceremonial drum and will learn to die here,
a savage in both lands. But I will never be chink again.

II. Lessons in family

I am wicked, first-born and weightless. I dropped my mother's child
before she could learn to grow old, laughed at how the soft bone
learned to be malleable beneath my resentment.

I killed my mother in exchange for her burial rites;
knew that if I cut my tongue off here, she would die with hers still attached.

Bleeding and fresh, the sinew thrashes in my palms, tells me

"Look at all those white people living beautiful lives. We will not have that.

I cannot give that to you." I sell it to the next white man who looks like my father.

Feel a rage so old it finds my daughter new. Let him take it,

and you will build his white picket fence. Give it willingly,

and you will share his American dream. A parasite;

I enter his home to kill him. Perhaps then

I will learn to hold this rage quietly. Let the burial grounds forgive my ruin.

I will learn to bear his children with love—or perhaps not.

III. Lessons in queerness

Tell the white-moon-lit-girl to run her rotting hands over
my carcass. I am in love with her, but my grandmothers
do not know the word for fag in Korean just yet.

White girl after white girl, and I have become no more of myself than before.

I am sun-soaked deity, a golden blessing of the East;

I am nothing but a vessel of grief lying dead in a white woman's hands.

My mother grabs me by the tongue, palms slick with burning oil
and the smell of overturned earth.

"Don't be afraid," she warns, "There is nothing left of you here.

Nothing to run from. Nothing to go home to."

Eomma—tell the ancestral ghosts to fuck my queerness
before it fucks me. Before I learn how to ruin us all.

IV. Lessons in grief

I learn to raise a fucking dynasty.

Send my sisters to spark mushroom-shaped bombs into lands of yellow people,
yellow chains, and yellow fool's gold. Yellow-half-child;
their graves await you. Bury the masses and your grandmother will name you "foreigner" from
where you stand on her lover's bones. How little their lives are worth.

Still, with blue clothed hands posed to rip your hair from its roots,
you learn to mourn the homeland.

Eomma—learn to forgive me. I will learn to drown
in the enormity of my blood. Will raise my children
on the sound of our fragile and blood-soft ruin.

Watch; my daughters grow blonde hair
and fly away from me. My sons go to war for the motherland
and die praying to their father's god.

I learn filial piety at last.

Contributors

Matthew Babcock

Matthew James Babcock is an old-school, over-fifty professor who continues to succumb to the irresistible urge to scribble sentences fictive, non-fictive, and poetic. He remains an Idahoan, virtuoso unicyclist, and failed breakdancer. If you look for his writing, you just might find it.

Julie Benesh

Julie Benesh's work has earned an Illinois Arts Council Grant and a Pushcart nomination. Julie has an MFA in fiction from Warren Wilson College, lives in Chicago with two cats and a lot of books, and works a day job as a professor and at a school of psychology.

Lisa Brognano

Lisa Brognano enjoys knitting, swimming, and scribing long lists of tasks for her husband to complete around the house and in the backyard.

Kelly Chitwood

Kelly Chitwood is a senior student at California State Northridge and majors in Creative Writing. She hopes to expanding her experience with short stories into full length novels. Kelly lives with her little dog and idea supervisor Opal.

Gabriel Clark-Leach

Gabriel is an attorney who represents frontline community groups and national nonprofits fighting for clean air and environmental justice in Texas. He lives in Austin with his wife.

Eric Delp

Eric Delp received an MFA from Ole Miss, and now lives in St. Petersburg, FL. He writes mostly about metaphysics and rivers.

Karen Downs-Barton

Karen Downs-Barton is a neurodiverse poet from the Roma community. She started her working life as a dancer and magicians assistant but recently spends her time exploring the wilds of Wiltshire and writing a magic realist poetry collection.

Craig Finlay

Craig Finlay is a poet and a librarian. He fell into librarianship because he wanted to find a job and he fell into poetry because he wanted to impress a girl. Both worked out for him. He's not very good at finishing things but he's great at starting them. If starting things were an Olympic Sport he could absolutely qualify for the U.S. team but he'd never finish applying. He writes about place a lot, and memory.

Giles Goodland

Giles Goodland's day job is as a researcher and editor for a large historical dictionary of the English language. He feels dwarfed and awed by the immensity and complexity of the language, and seeks to explore it further by writing poems based on the language's non-referential and functional words, where the webbing is most visible.

James Grabill

For years, he's taught all kinds of writing, lit & global issues relative to sustainability.

Pawel Grajner

Pawel Grajner is a writer/filmmaker working in Poland and the US.

Donald Guadagni

Donald Guadagni was a foreign expert teaching in Taizhou University and Ningbo City College of vocational technology as one of the first foreigner experts involved in the Sino-US projects class programs beginning in 2011. Prior to teaching in China and Taiwan he taught in the Arizona public school system. Prior personal iterations include (Veteran / Law Enforcement / Test Engineer / Prisons / Public Policy / Educator)

Anna Idelevich

Anna Idelevich is a scientist by profession, Ph.D., MBA, trained in the neuroscience field at Harvard University.

Ai Jiang

Ai Jiang is a Chinese-Canadian writer and poet who graduated with a BA in English Literature from The University of Toronto and a current student at Humber School for Writers. She enjoys writing to the sound of crackling fire places and thundering storms with her favorite drinks by her side--bubble tea or Coca Cola, sometimes both. Ai also likes to hoard stationary and often finds herself with way more than she can possibly use in her lifetime.

Dorothy Lawrenson

Dorothy Lawrenson is a poet who writes in English and Scots. She is currently completing a PhD in Creative Writing at the University of Edinburgh, having earned her MFA at Texas State University. She was the winner of the Wigtown Scots Prize in the 2019 Wigtown Poetry Prize.

Wyeth Leslie

Wyeth Leslie received his MFA in Poetry from Oklahoma State University, where he also received his Bachelor's in English. His writings express interest in the intersection between technology, the environment, and human relationships. He currently resides in Oklahoma where he teaches at a local college.

Stephen Guy Mallett

Stephen Guy Mallett was born and raised. Him, he studies uxorial phenomenology, pocket ontology, and adjectivally bereft haibun in Snowheresville, QC.

Joshua Martin

Joshua Martin is a Philadelphia based writer and filmmaker, who currently works in a library.

Stephen Mead

Stephen Mead is an Outsider multi-media artist and writer. Since the 1990s he's been grateful to many editors for publishing his work in print zines and eventually online. He is also grateful to have managed to keep various day jobs for the Health Insurance. Currently he is resident artist/curator for The Chroma Museum, artistic renderings of LGBTQI historical figures, organizations and allies predominantly before Stonewall, The Chroma Museum.

Thomas Osatchoff

Thomas Osatchoff, together with family, is building a self-sustaining home near a waterfall.

Ralph Pennel

Ralph Pennel's work has been nominated for a Pushcart, the Best Small Fictions Anthology, and he was twice a finalist for Somerville Poet Laureate. Ralph is a founding editor and the fiction editor for the online literary journal, Midway Journal. Ralph is a film buff and an avid amateur photographer and often works at the intersection language and image. He lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts

Lana Perice

Lana Perice is a Senior attending Cleveland High School. She is passionate about both social justice and creative writing.

Cole Pragides

Cole Pragides is an Asian-American teenage writer at the University of Colorado, Boulder where he is studying Environmental Engineering and Creative Writing. His earliest memory is realizing he stepped on a snail and crying. You can probably find him tending to his houseplants and herb garden.

Radoslav Rochallyi

Rochallyi connects mathematics with poetry. He is a representative of metamodernism and flirts with post-structuralism. He also uses chemical formulas, painting, and other art forms, which he always associates with poetry.

Jason Rodriguez

Jason N. Rodriguez is a queer artist and graduate from California Institute of the Arts. His writing explores the interrelationship of graphic design and poetry with a specific concern on the mobility of language, rhythm, and sonic-motivations in a visual system. He is currently an MFA Writing candidate at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago where he assists on the schools F-Newsmagazine and podcast, SAIC Beat. He is an Assistant Poetry Editor for the literary journal ANMLY.

Cyrus Shafii

Cyrus Shafii is a queer, Iranian-American emerging writer and poet with an appreciation for the macabre and mundane alike. They have written numerous articles and media releases published by CSUN Today. Cyrus, despite (or perhaps because of) their dyslexia, loves the written word nearly as much as they love their cat, Dolly.

Shyla Sheen

Shyla Shehan is an analytical Virgo who was raised in Iowa and has spent the majority of her life in the midwest. She holds an MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska where she received an American Academy of Poets Prize in 2020. She lives in Omaha, Nebraska with her husband, children, and four wily cats and spends most days tending to a healthy household. She is pleased with her role as Managing Editor for [The Good Life Review](#) and enjoys gardening, road trips, blogging from her treadmill, and hunting for the perfect cheeseburger.

Dave Shortt

Dave Shortt is a longtime writer from the USA whose work has appeared over the years in a number of electronic & print literary-type venues. Probably his most pressing life's goal is to retire from the workaday world & among other things, to concentrate more on his writing.

Priya Tamang

Priya Dolma Tamang is a doctor, a poet and an author from the north-east Indian state of Sikkim. With her tribal Nepali roots and deeply seated Buddhist beliefs, culture and mindfulness have both been active themes in her writing.

Frank Weaver

Frank Weaver was born and raised in Paraguay, moving to the United States when he was a teenager. He has been searching for Mount Analog since 2005.

Sonya Wohletz

Sonya Wohletz is a researcher and writer whose interests include colonial Latin American art, the motions of the planets, and the weather. She was born in a limestone cave in New Mexico and lived there for a long time before committing to a sort of peripatetic humanhood. She has grown opposable thumbs and enjoys using them to write, paint, and make trouble.

