

Vol. One

Winter 2020

# The Vital Sparks



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## 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.

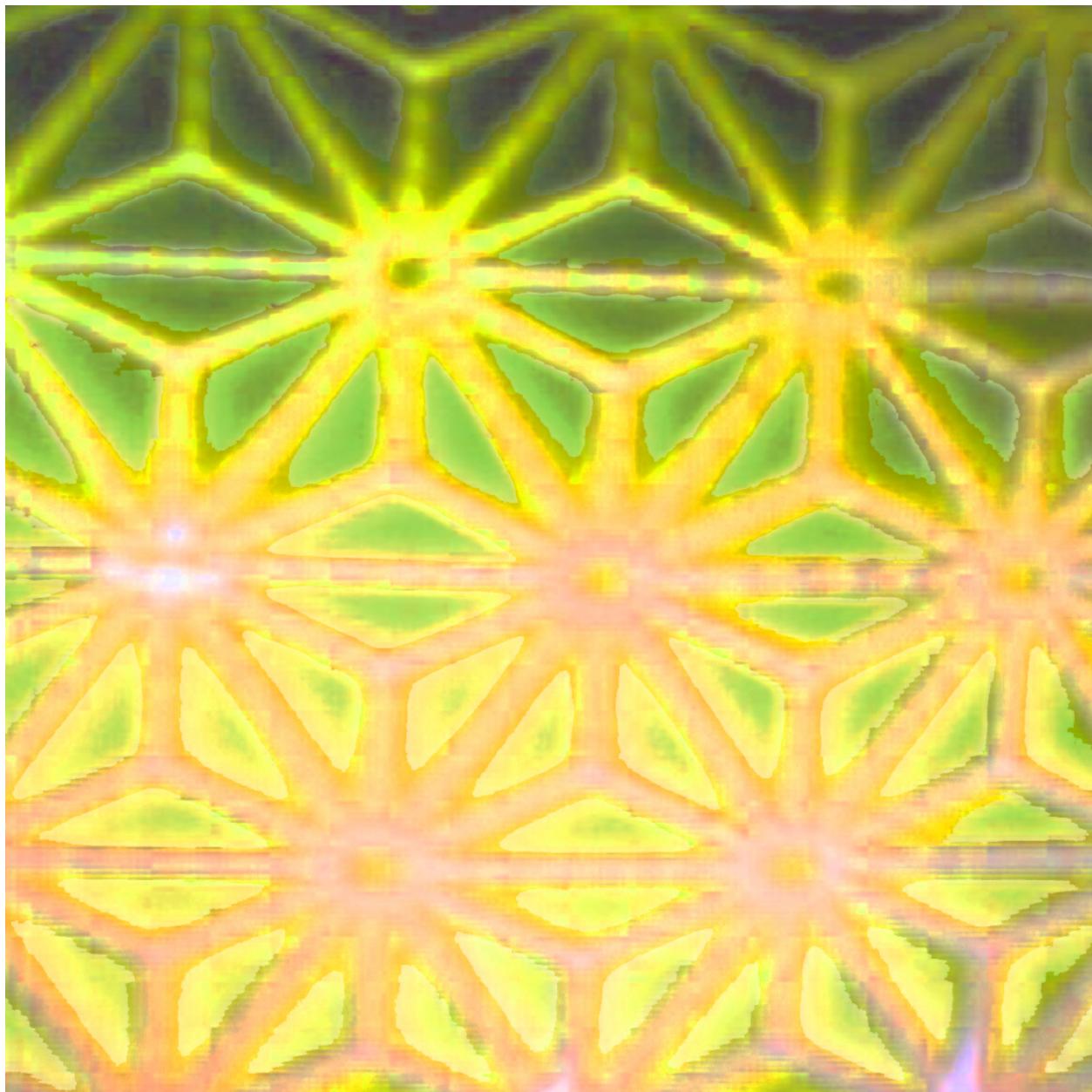
— The Vital Sparks

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## 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 bogged 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 mummery, masque for mummery.

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 loafes 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 trifles 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 lously, 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 skyscapes  
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 31<sup>st</sup> 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.  
and bundle golden sheaves,

Deciding the seasons.

We seek them out

No, not this one.

*Ia. Proof of the First Part*

An absolute

Will sprout bare wings

and stumble.

*IIa. 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 loooove 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  
  
employed 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 in the grip

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

speaking 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?

### III. The Given

Where the species appear intent on deriving benefits, in this climate  
of 50-ton earthmovers and politicians taking the side of deep-sea trenches,

with pilots sporting a sweet bent before river banks of exposure  
mammals shaking early muds from the fur of synaptic operations  
accompanied by exotic displays of impermanence

as heavily invested as two-thousand-year-old blood  
when served on sterling silver trays in a ritual that approximates  
what's known about dying  
under brilliance of the far-off Andromeda Galaxy

this era when no one can say what you'll find in a drop of water  
or what a family may need now that everyone's experienced  
more than a fair share of clear-cutting with impermanence  
wind-sculpted by flaming normality.

Given as many faces backed up by the door as spins of the compass,  
there's the dumb-folded majesty of influence with touches of the sublime

extraordinary heat that spikes, but. waking to  
at high noon in the unfathomable compromising yields  
, at the wolfed-in margins,

far from paradigm collisions, at the sharp horizon  
in a whisper on wide-angled stretches,

with entrails the cat left by the back door, to share a little liver  
the teeth can sink into, where we're all spare parts of the river.

#### 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  
makes the place  
an ocean of cells, breath the incessant waves  
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* w as 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* w as 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

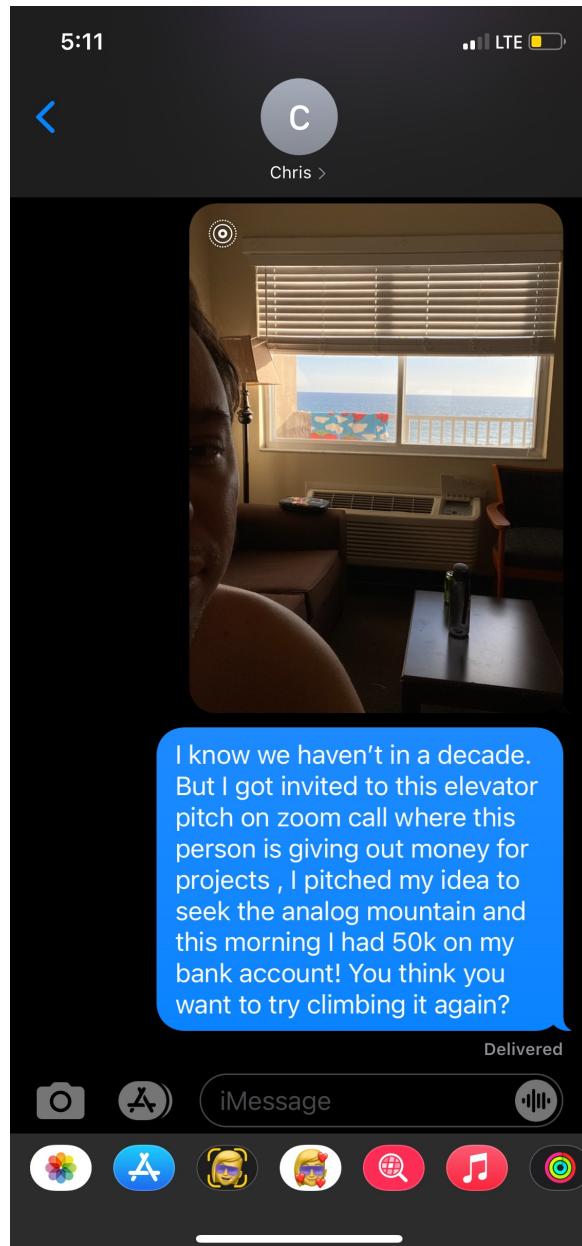
translated to *computer* but *cucumber* was meant. T'm thinking we can think in pictures. T'm  
sliding! Ouch or let's play a language sound game. What's the first thing that comes to  
slide of mind on hearing these words: crown, mouse, door, pour, court?

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  $\frac{me}{up}$*

*...  $\frac{just}{amen}$*

*Bad = ; ;*

*Terrible*

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

## 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 budges. 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 fizz 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 a 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, hazardously 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 stick<sup>1</sup>

the carrot<sup>2</sup>

bothersome<sup>3</sup> blisters<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> spoken like truth carried over

into rotting fences bypassed

& singing

<sup>2</sup> night vision myths

carried over into reality

disappointment

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

<sup>4</sup> 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 apt<sup>5</sup>

....

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

.

---

<sup>5</sup> a simple equation will not do

the scientific method not a

solution to every problem

*nothing out of nothing yields the nowhere that condemns*

insanity → goals,  
ambitions,  
hopes,  
dreams,  
desires,  
ideals.

achievement? ←

0  
\\/  
◇

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

↓  
scourge  
<scoundrels>  
↑  
pointlessness.

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.



## 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

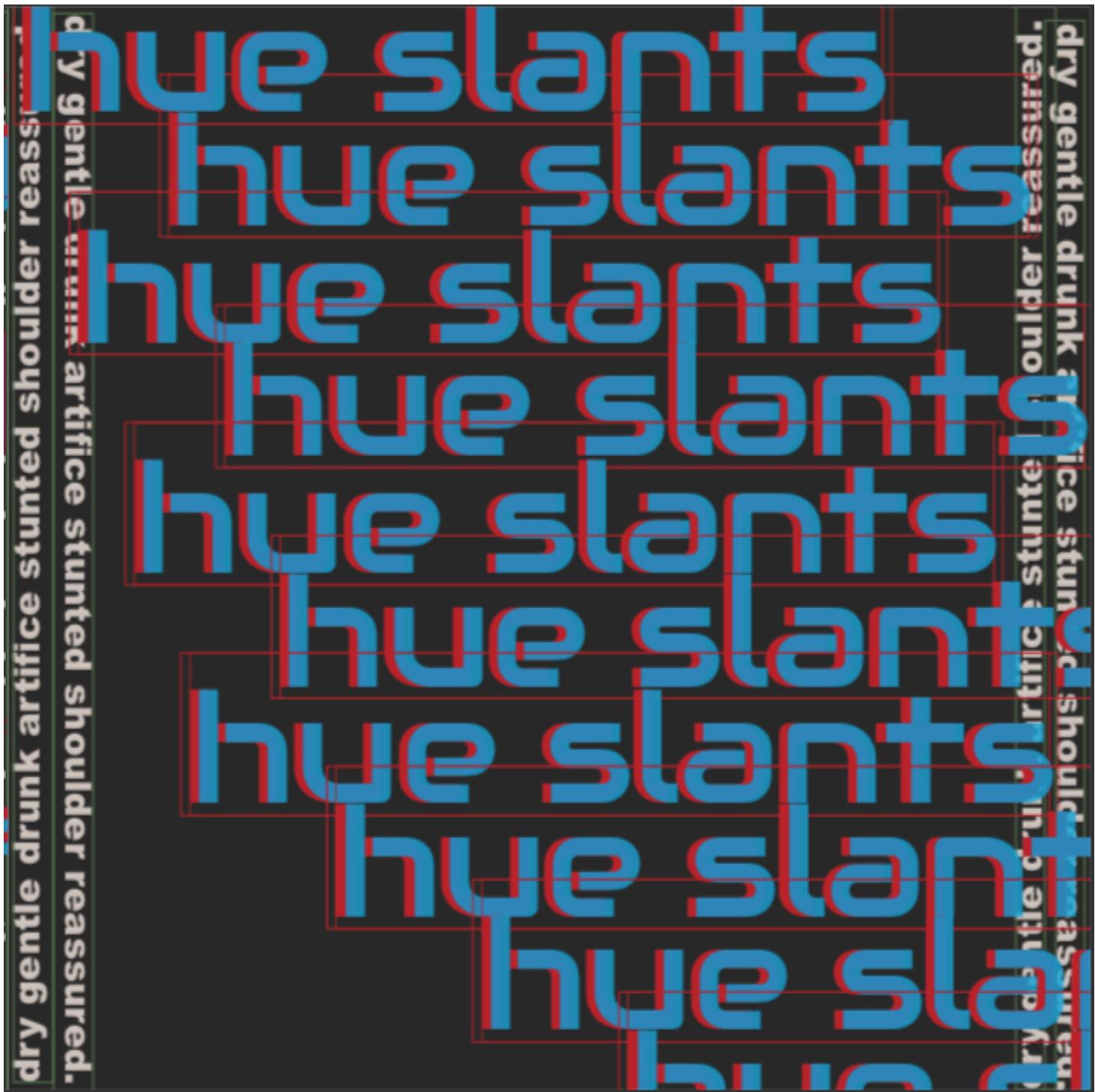
### *passive\_distractions*

```
(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(oft
ime)
{areonlyslippingseconds})noDelay=functio
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. temp parallels obliterated here]

& *here!*—or there,

the perpendicularly  
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 jambing 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

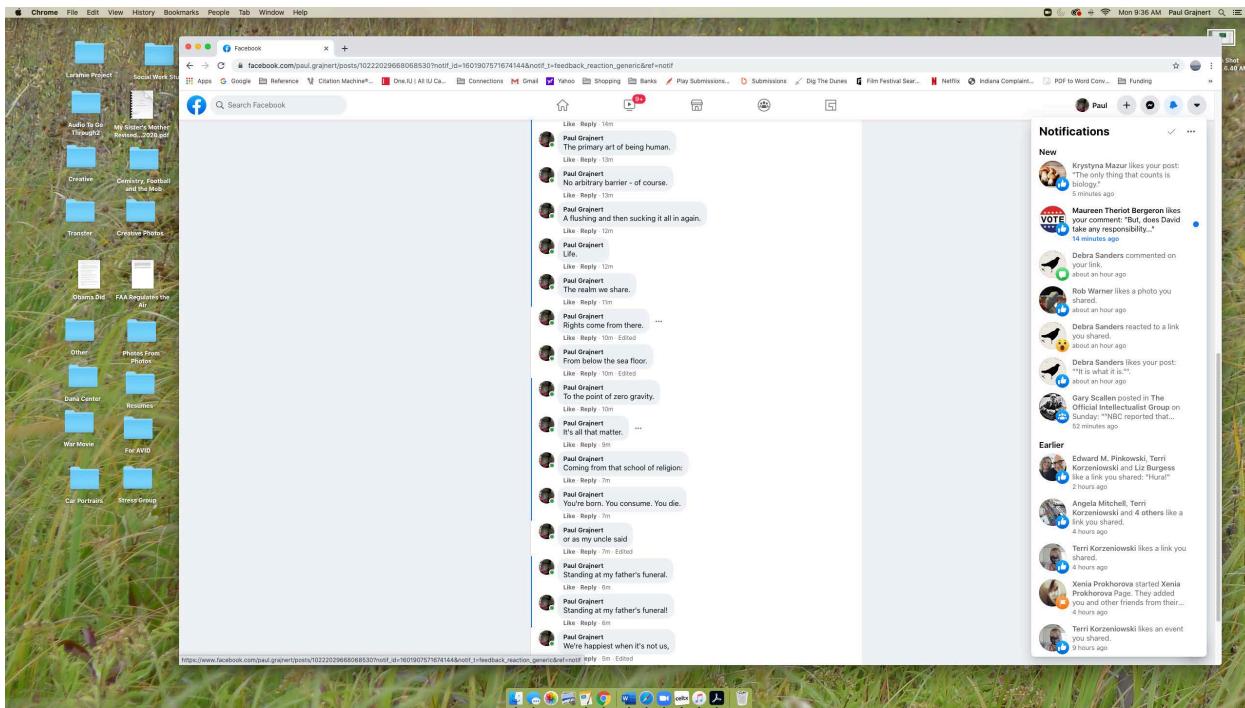
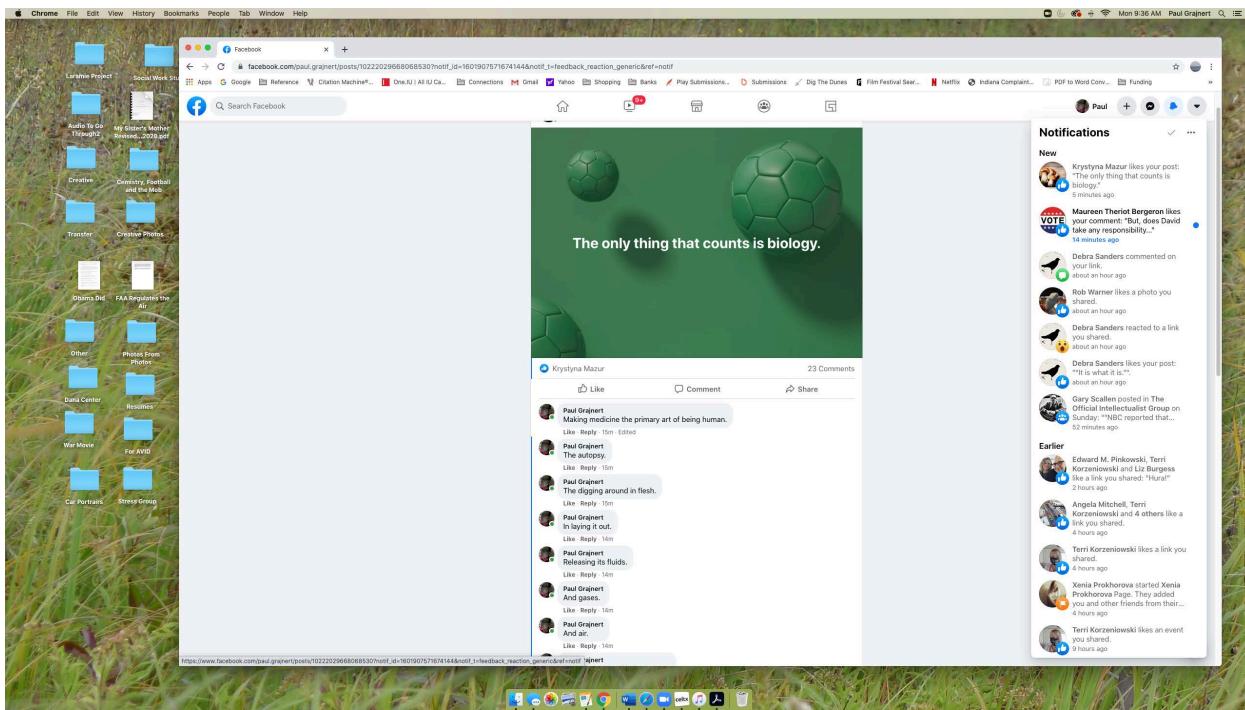
DNA coded  
into a pennywhistle flurry  
of jazz riff or molded lullaby

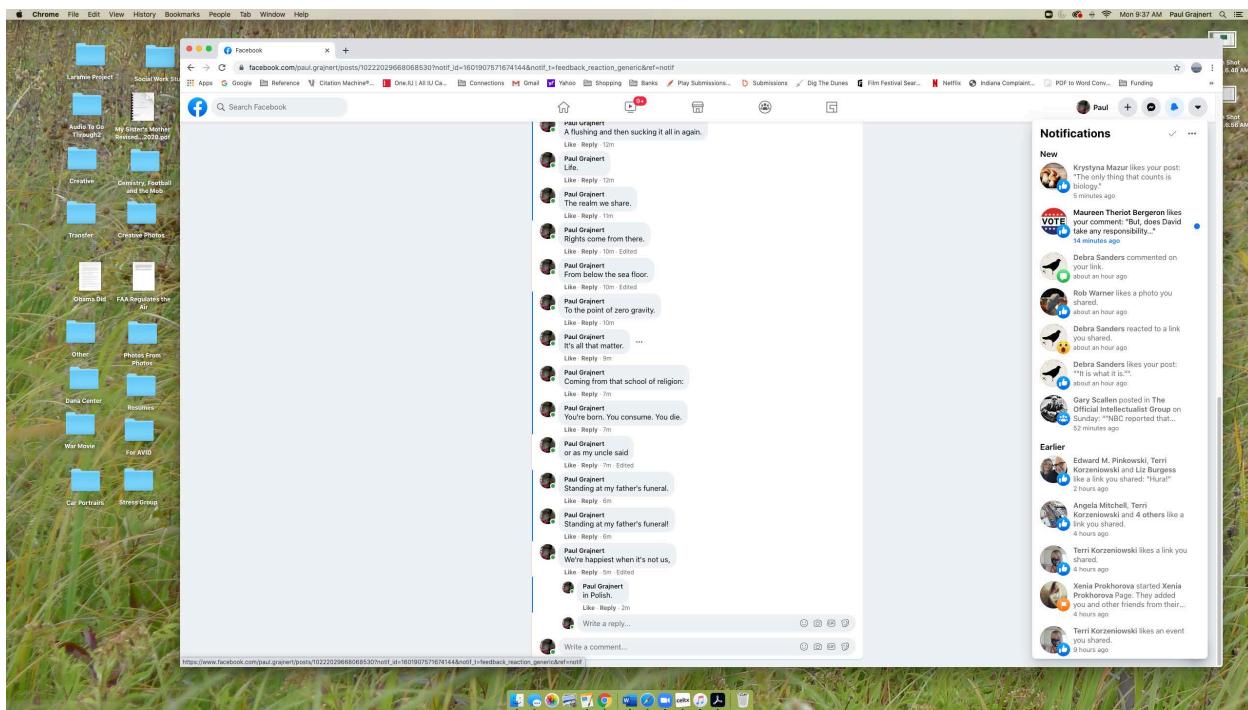
liberated from  
genomes,  
the notes (like promises  
of lips & fingertips)  
leaching back to earth,  
bent, with scratches

'rare deposits of unsophisticated touches'

# Paweł Grajnert

## 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 expand 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.

**Paweł Grajnert**

Paweł Grajnert 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 humankind. She has grown opposable thumbs and enjoys using them to write, paint, and make trouble.

